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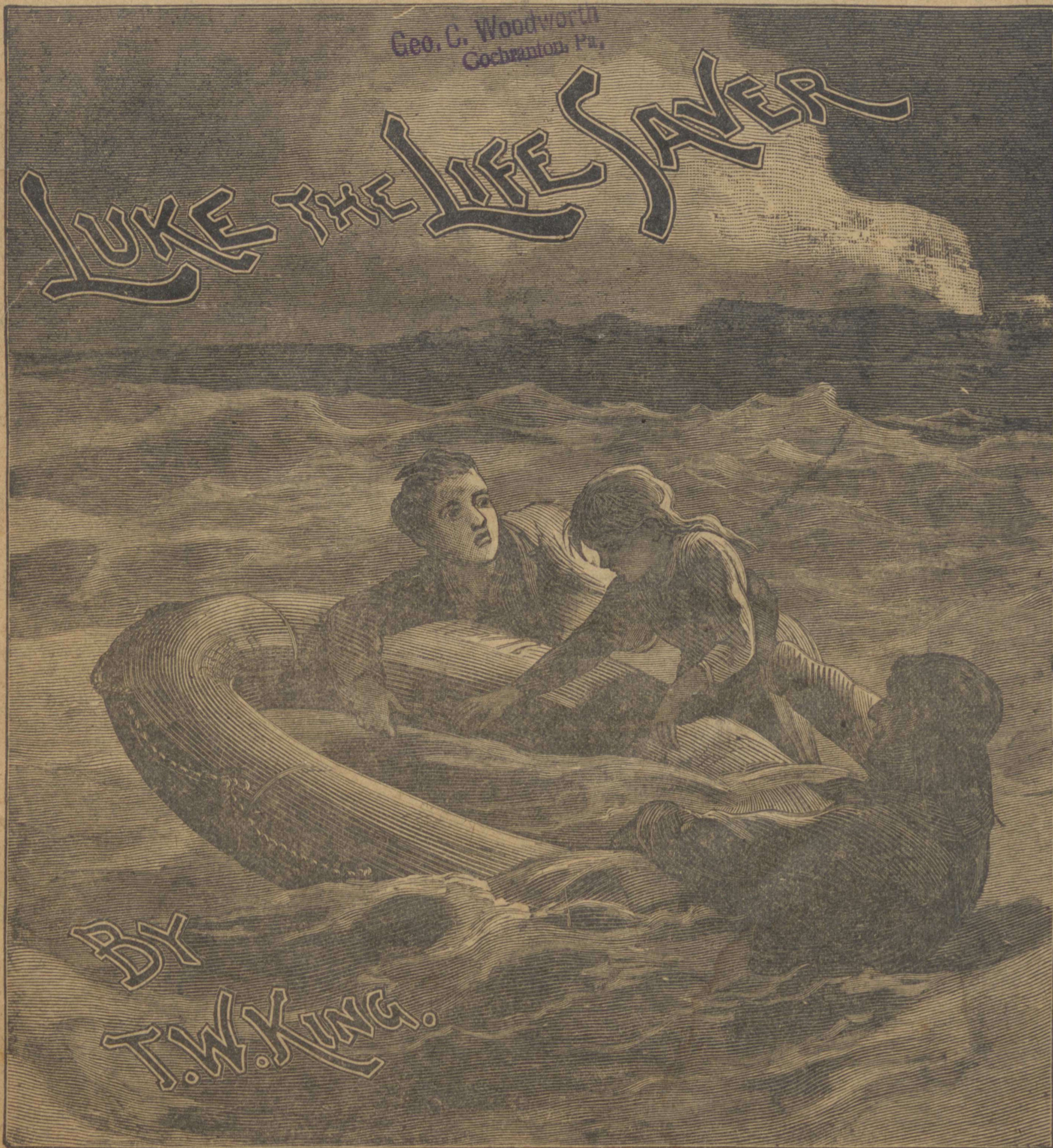
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LUKE THE LIFE SAVER

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M. Y. TAYLOR,
Dover, Delaware.

By
T. W. KING.



Then the boy Life-saver and the brave Indian placed the still conscious child in safety thereon.

Cochran, Pa.

Luke, the Life-Saver;

OR,

The Wreckers of Bell-Point Light.

A Story of the Last of the Shinnecocks.

BY TOM W. KING.

CHAPTER I.

THE WRECK OF THE JESSIE.

ROOM!

Low and sullen, the muffled roar of the minute-gun rung over the wild waste of waters that encompassed the doomed ship, as she flew before the howling blast toward her destruction.

Room! and again the cannon rolled out its appeal from brazen throat, while, at the same moment, a rocket flew hissing into the air, leaving a long, fiery trail of sparks behind it, finally breaking into a thousand coruscations.

As the cloud of sparks died away, the night seemed yet blacker, and save for the foam that capped the waves, as they rushed by like white-maned steeds, all was as ebony-hued as Erebus.

The decks were crowded, and clinging one to the other, the women moaned and shrieked and prayed, half-paralyzed with fear and the agony of approaching death, and wholly benumbed with cold.

The hurricane increased in violence; the thunders crashed as if they would burst the vault of heaven asunder, while the wind, howling through the torn rigging, seemed to yell like the spirits of the damned, exulting in the approaching calamity.

At once the inky pall above was rent from zenith to nadir, and, as the forked lightning flashed the whole scene into brightness, the blue glare laid before the horrified on-lookers the wild scene of danger, destruction and death that confronted them.

Right on the lee bow, and scarce a half-dozen cable-lengths distant, frowned a jutting crag, its base buried in the wildly-lashing waves, its summit lost in the low-lying clouds of flying scud which swept over it, driven before the gale; and onto this iron-jawed cliff the ship was driving with terrible rapidity.

The best bowers both gone—the iron cable-chains having snapped like thread the moment the anchor-flukes grounded, all hopes of saving the vessel were futile, and the cooler heads on board began their preparations to meet the shock, while the weaker ones, abandoning themselves completely to the terror which palsied their very tongues, groveled to the deck, crouching low in the ice-cold water which poured over the bulwarks, and hid their faces in their hands, to shut out from their sight the fearful panorama spread before them, although it was indelibly imprinted on their whirling brains.

Standing by the lee mizzen-shrouds, with one hand tightly grasping the ice-clad ropes, his other arm encircling a woman, who nestled close to his broad breast, stood the captain of the good ship Jessie, from Canton to New York, laden with teas and Chinese stuffs.

He had done all that mortal man could do to avoid the present peril, but when, a few hours before, a wave of more than ordinary power had carried away the stern-post and left the rudder dangling and banging at the ship's side, like some hungry leviathan knocking for entrance, he became powerless, and prepared for the worst—and the worst in such cases almost invariably means death.

The maddened sailors—maddened by fear and no drink—they having broken into the spirit-room and drank until they had become more like demons than like men, while the captain was in his cabin, consulting his chart—had endeavored to seize and launch the boats, of which but two, the long-boat and the captain's gig, remained uninjured, the others having been stove shortly after the accident to the rudder.

Twice had the captain's pistol flashed, twice had its report been heard far above the shrieking of the tempest, and the souls of two of the mutineers had swept off upon the gale, before order had in a measure been restored.

Lying in the lee-scuppers, and washing hither and thither as the vessel rolled and plunged, lay the body of the chief mate, a ghastly wound in his head, from which the blood oozed, bearing witness that his life had been lost in endeavoring to prevent the turbulent spirits from satisfying their craving for the demon, alcohol.

Near the captain, and also clinging to the shrouds, stood, swaying with the motion of the vessel, a tall, bronzed sailor, whose skin, of that bright copper color which proclaims the red-man, stamped him as an Indian.

And this he was: an Indian belonging to the tribe of the Shinnecocks—a tribe that was on Long Island when our forefathers landed there, and a tribe which, extending the hand of fellowship to the whites, always was a firm friend to them until the last of his race went down to his death, under the boiling sea.

Closely sheltered in his arms he held a clinging child, a golden-haired, dainty creature, that seemed as little fitted for this wild scene as an

infant to a scene of carnage, and whose wide-opened blue eyes, looking up into the face of her protector, bore that look which the stricken deer turns upon the hunter that has wounded it.

"Winnemuka," it was the captain who spoke, "the shock cannot long delay. I intrust Lillian to your care—mine must be Mrs. Grace," and he designated his wife at his side.

"Should aught befall us"—and the low, deep tones, heard so distinctly above the pandemonium that reigned, trembled for an instant, as he faltered at the thought of his young wife—not of himself; "should aught befall us, take care of the child—her parents, relatives and friends live in"—a louder shriek than any that had preceded it rung out on the hellish uproar, a shriek so intense in its agony that the captain paused and turned his head.

As if, gathered in one mighty mass, the entire volume of the salt seas had been marshaled to cheat the rocks of their prey, a towering wave, to which all others seemed pigmies, reared its giant crest aloft, far above the cross-trees, and hanging for a moment, fell like a crushing avalanche, full upon the doomed craft.

And as the salt mass fell, striking with the weight of many tons down upon the deck, the mighty timbers, the forged irons, the hewn spars, were crushed and twisted and broken like reeds, while mingled with the crashing masses of wreckage were a hundred human beings; some dashed into instant death, others, less fortunate, endeavoring in vain to extricate themselves from the grinding mill and turmoil into which they had been hurled.

Captain Grace, on catching sight of this new danger that threatened them, and knowing that almost instant death awaited them if they retained their posts, turned to leap overboard, hoping almost against hope, that he would be able to reach the land with his precious burden—dearer to him than existence—his young, six-months' bride—Jessie.

But the wind, as if furthering the plans of its ally, the sea, had entwined and hustled the poor girl's garments in and out of the shrouds, and while her husband was laboring, with tearing fingers, to release her, the blow came, and, locked in each other's arms, eye reading in eye that death together was better than life apart, they were dashed to instant insensibility against the cruel bulwarks by the crueler waters, and never drew breath again, their requiem the howling of the winds, the cries of the dying, the crunching of iron and wood and thundering of the waters, as they, too, went down into the maelstrom beneath.

Before the mighty wave that had wrought such destruction had broken, however, and still hung as if gloating over its prey, with yawning maw, like a hungry lion, the Shinnecock had gathered the child closer in his arms, encircling her form with a piece of rope hastily cut from a signal halliard hanging near by, swinging in the wind, and tying her fast to his body; then, with one last look at his captain, a look of devotion which seemed to say: "I will be true to my trust!" he turned and leaped into the seething flood below, and in an instant was lost to view as the waves tossed and tumbled about him like a leaf.

And in a moment more the vessel, or what was left of it, struck with a terrific shock, and the waters were strewn far and wide with the floating witnesses of the fearful tragedy which had just been enacted, and of which not a living soul who was on board when the Jessie struck survived to tell the tale.

CHAPTER II.

A HEROINE.

"A TERRIBLE night, Bill," remarked one of the weather-beaten keepers at Bell Point Lighthouse, on the evening in question as, with his night-glass in his hand, he strove in vain to pierce the gloom, while his oil skins streamed with the salt spray blown high in the air, and his huge sou'wester, tied firmly over his ears, flapped about his face as the gale struggled with it and endeavored to wrench it from his head.

"A fearful night indeed, Tom," returned his comrade, alike so weather-beaten, so grizzled, so wrapped in oil skins and sou'wester as to appear the twin brother of the other; "an' many a poor soul 'll go to Davy Jones's locker before the gale breaks. The light's not o' much service in such a blow as this," gazing as he spoke, at the flashing lantern which gleamed above their heads like a great yellow eye looking out over the sea.

"Ye're right; for the mist an' scud hides it a half-mile from shore. Say, Bill, d'ye rek'lect the las' blow we had, summat like this 'ere 'un? I always said that there ne'er'd be such another, an' if there was we'd see the Injun—Great God, Bill! look yon—about two pints to the south'ard of yon rock—d'ye see anythink?"

Bill looked, and then, with a wild cry of terror, fled, closely followed by his frightened companion, who pantingly brought up the rear, while neither stopped until safely ensconced within the stone walls of the light-house, the door of which they firmly bolted and barred, and then hurried up the winding stairs which led to the top.

Reaching the lantern, they called to their

partner who was on the watch, and the three stepped out onto the iron balcony which surrounded the structure.

Here they felt the full force and fury of the hurricane, for hurricane it had become by this time.

High up as they were, the wind tore and pulled them, until they were compelled to grasp the iron railing with both hands, to escape being blown away and swept far out to sea; while the tall building swayed and trembled as if about to topple over to the stony ground beneath.

In silence—for their voices could not be heard amid the warring of the elements—they stood and looked, their awe increased by the presence of that superstition which seems innate with all sailors.

Not far from shore, and where, on account of the greater shallowness of the waters, the waves were lashed into tumultuous fury, surrounded by a pale, unearthly glow which appeared to come from no particular point but to inwrap and infold the little craft like an illuminated veil, danced a boat, a veritable cockle-shell, which seemed like straw on the waters, so lightly was it tossed and flung about.

At one moment it was tossed high in the air, and seemed so poised on the top of the wave that the bow and stern hung suspended. The next it was engulfed between the glassy mountains which reared their sides of opaque green far above it on either side, and as it disappeared the on-lookers held their breath, as if never expecting to see the boat reappear.

Seated amidships, an oar in each hand, sat a girl, her long black hair streaming in the wind, her head and arms bare, and her form clothed in a garment of creamy white which rendered her appearance still more unearthly.

Staring straight toward the wake that could scarce be traced in the foaming sea, her body swayed to and fro like clock-work, while the oars, churning the salt waters into a still greater mass of foam, rose and fell in perfect rhythm as the boat shot forward through the breakers.

She seemed like the spirit of the storm, the guardian of the winds and waves, as she pursued her course, steadily, unvaryingly, toward the west.

As the dim light grew dimmer and the eyes of the three keepers were strained to keep her in sight, a sudden crash was heard, and in an instant they were in total darkness; a wild fog, bewildered by the glare of the light, had dashed against one of the shielding panes of glass and shattered it into a thousand pieces, falling to the base of the tower, dead, while the gale, finding free entrance, extinguished the lamps in a twinkling.

In a moment the men had groped their way inside the lantern and set about repairing the damage done, for it was of vital importance that they should re-illuminate the lamps as soon as practicable, even though they could not be seen far out at sea.

It was a work of no easy accomplishment, and while Tom and the other keeper descended the long stairs that led to the bottom in search of another sash, Bill remained in the lantern watching with superstitious awe the dim light which alone denoted the presence of the mysterious maiden, and as he looked, a half-suppressed cry arose to his lips, for, dashing right down on the frail craft which seemed so miraculously to ride the lashing waves, came a schooner, scudding before the breeze, under close-reefed jib and mainsail, while the topmasts, hanging in shreds, showed that they had been blown bodily from their bolt-ropes.

The wind had lulled for a moment, and the mist having become less dense, the trained eyes of the old sailor were enabled to pierce the gloom, and trace the outlines of the vessel, as, like a greyhound when the leash is slipped she dashed onward toward the pointed rocks that guarded the coast with their jagged teeth and cruel fangs of granite.

And now, if ever, the light should be burning, for the tired lookout, blinded by the biting spray, could not see the coast, nor could he hear the loud roaring of the breakers, as the wind was blowing directly on shore.

With a cry of horror at the impending catastrophe, the old light-house keeper closed his eyes, and shut his ears to keep out the dying shrieks of the drowning; but in a moment turned again and looked.

But what miracle is this?

Instead of seeing the schooner hurtling her wooden bows against the beetling rocks, her helm had been put down, and, close-hauled, she was beating southeast, on the larboard tack, and throwing the white masses of foam far above her cat-head, was rapidly leaving in her wake the angry waters which madly lashed and dashed among the half-hidden rocks, as if in fury at being baffled of their prey.

As the schooner slid off into the darkness, the keeper, with a sigh of relief, turned to the door, and opening it, stood at the top of the stairs, listening for the ascending footsteps of his comrades; but all was silent as the grave, and indeed the winding stairs resembled nothing so much as the entrance to a vault.

Time sufficient had elapsed since their departure for the two men to have returned with the

sash, and thinking that they might have met with some trouble in handling it, the keeper began to feel his way cautiously down the stone steps, groping with his hands outstretched on the stone walls on either side, for he had no light, and all was of a pitchy darkness.

As his feet encountered the stone landing at the bottom of the long staircase, he called out to his fellow-keeper:

"Tom! Tom!"

But there was no response—no sound came back to him, save the hollow reverberation of his voice as it rung through the light-house, echoing against its massive walls with a mournful sound.

He began to grow uneasy, for he saw no glimmer of light, and as the closet wherein were kept the oil, wicks, extra sashes and other articles used in keeping the light in order, was not far off, being but a few paces to his right, the silence was inexplicable.

Turning, he was proceeding slowly toward the closet, when his foot encountered an obstacle, and, stooping, his hand came in contact with a human face, which, though still warm, was wet!

"My God!" he cried, "what is this?" and he staggered back, just as a blinding glare flashed in his face and a harsh voice gruffly said:

"This is what it is, ye howlin' bloke!" and a bludgeon descended with crushing force on his head, and he fell insensible to the cold stones beneath.

With a curse, the ruffian who had felled him, opening wide his lantern, sprung over the body, and, leaping upon the steps, three at a time, was soon in the lantern.

"This cursed lamp ain't a-goin' to burn no more this yere night," he growled. "The wreckers are a-sufferin' an' must have work," and taking the wicks from the half-dozen lamps that served as beacons, he threw them out of the broken window, and then, leaning out, he looked out toward the east.

This pause was fatal to him!

As he was gazing with wild, exultant joy toward the sea, where a white-winged bark was holding her course straight on shore, he muttered to himself:

"Ah, ha, my beauty, come on! Your bones will soon lie on yonder reef and your cargo will be ours, ours, ours!" and with a fiendish chuckle he turned toward the door.

But there, all robed in black, stood a female form, her white face framed in the darkness behind her, like a waxen mask, her teeth clinched, and her right hand raised to a level with her eye.

There was a sharp report, and as the flash came gleaming toward him, the deadly bullet entered his forehead, piercing what of brain he had, and with a groan and smothered curse, the wrecker and murderer fell forward on his face, stone dead.

Quickly barring the door, the girl, lighting a wax-taper—for the wind had shifted suddenly from the south to the northeast, hurriedly approached the lamps to relight them, casting a glance at the rapidly approaching bark, dimly seen through the darkness, as she did so.

"Heavens!" she shrieked, "there are no wicks in the lamps!"

For a moment she was palsied, then, with an inspiration that seemed almost divine, she tore from her frail form the light cotton dress she wore, steeped it in the inflammable oil that filled the lamps, and touching her taper to it, saw it leap into flame as flashes the gunpowder when the spark is applied, and throwing it into the oil, realized that the flare would burn for some moments at least, and the ship be saved; then reeling, she fell, fainting to the floor, her hand touching the pool of blood which had flowed from the forehead of the dead wrecker!

CHAPTER III.

SAVED AND LOST.

As Winnemuka and his charge plunged into the bitter waters, that closed over their heads as if to crush them in their ice-cold embrace, it seemed as if the Indian had, of two deaths, chosen the easier, for it did not appear as if it were within the power of mortal man to battle with the lashing waves that encompassed him, and, for a while, seemed to toy with him as does a cat with a mouse.

Now he was flung so high that his breath almost forsook his body, and then dropped like a meteor to the depths of the yawning gulf, between the masses of water; buffeted, bruised, half-stunned by the repeated blows from the hurtling waves; half-stifled with the salt spray that filled his mouth, his nostrils, his ears, his eyes; turned and twisted, taking advantage of every instant to gasp for a mouthful of fresh air; he yet held the child as high up above him as the binding cord would admit, so that even when he was submerged the little creature who clung to him so confidently was often free to breathe the free air, which seemed so sweet to his tired lungs when he could inhale it.

But at length tired nature could do no more, and when, as he rose high on a mountain wave and gazed at the beetling cliffs, he saw with

horror that the tide had carried him far to the westward of the island, hope unfolded her pinions and fled, and the Indian threw up his arms high above his head, and with a cry

"Like some strong swimmer in his agony,"

sunk down deep beneath the whelming waters, faithful unto death, lifting the child he had learned to love during the voyage still higher as he sunk.

But as he rose for the second time, a dark mass seemed to fall from the heavens above, while close by loomed an indistinct shape which he thought must be some solitary rock, and with the instinct of a drowning man, he clutched out to grasp anything his fingers might come in contact with.

But at that moment a strong, fresh young voice close to his ear called out:

"Courage, my man, and we'll see if we can't save you!" and he felt a vigorous, muscular hand, that grasped him below the shoulder, and sustaining him, enabled him to in some measure regain his breath; for the tide had by this time swept him under the lee of the island, and there the water was comparatively smooth.

With that new-born courage which unexpected aid always instills, the Indian in a few moments almost regained his strength, and was enabled to aid his rescuer in the double duty of sustaining himself and his precious charge.

Not far off, and rocking on the long swells that rolled in from the Atlantic, a port-fire was hissing and blazing, lighting up the surface of the waters with a lurid glare, denoting that a life-buoy had been thrown over from some craft. Toward this they swam with long and powerful strokes and soon reached it. Then the boy life-saver and the brave Indian placed the still conscious child in safety thereon, supporting themselves with ease by the loops at the side.

Soon the measured beat of oars was heard, and bounding over the waters in the direction of the port-fire, came a yawl, propelled by six sturdy oarsmen, who, bending with a will to their work, bent the strong ash like willow wands, while the thole-pins creaked beneath the sinewy arms of the sailors, and in a few short minutes the rough tars, with hands as tender in their touch as a woman's, had lifted little Lillian into the stern-sheets, where a bed was quickly spread for her, pea-jackets being used, and she was covered up as carefully as if a mother were caring for her darling, while the Indian and his rescuer scrambled on board as best they could, dragging the life-buoy which had proven their salvation after them, when the word was given, and the yawl shot away in the direction of the schooner which, hove to, awaited them a half-mile to leeward.

The boat was soon alongside, and the falls being hooked on, was quickly hoisted to the davits, and the jib being hoisted a trifle, the schooner began to pay off, and with the wind on her larboard quarter, stood off on her course, while Lillian, taken below, was cared for by the captain's wife, and being undressed and warmed, sunk into the peaceful slumber known only to childhood and innocence, the Indian being furnished with dry clothing by his preserver.

The gale raged with unceasing violence; the darkness hung like a pall over the waters which, beneath the shadow of the heavens, were as black as they, while the stanch little schooner held her own bravely, shaking her bows impatiently as the salt waves at times poured over them as she went "nose under."

Crouching low in the bows, and shielded somewhat by the bulwarks, which were somewhat high for a vessel of her tonnage, the Indian and the lad who had rescued him were conversing earnestly.

The latter was as fine a specimen of the American youth as can be met in many a day's journey, and wore a winning, manly look that gave perfect confidence.

Tall, slender, yet muscularly built, with close-cut, curling chestnut hair, and frank, brown eyes, he did not appear more than sixteen, yet he had passed his eighteenth birthday. There was a certain look of sadness about his mouth, which was also set in lines of sternness that seemed out of place on the face of one so young; but he had seen much of the dark side of life, had lost both of his parents while yet a mere child, and his experience had left its stamp and impress on his face.

He was relating to Winnemuka the weird experiences of a few hours before—how the schooner, he being at the helm, had been headed straight for the rocks that lie off Bell-Point Light; how the light, through some fault of the keeper, was not burning, and how the lookout, tired and unable to see through the spray and darkness, had not discovered their dangerous proximity to the coast, and how a few moments longer would have dashed their craft on the jagged reef, when, without a sound to warn him of her presence, a girl—an Indian maiden—and here his listener started—had glided to his side, slowly, but with a strength wonderful in one so frail-looking, had put the helm hard down, while he, though dumfounded, had sense of duty enough left to haul in the main-sheet, when the vessel, sailing almost in the wind's eye, began to beat her way to the southeast, while the roar of the

breakers became distinctly audible as they left the shore under their larboard quarter and held on their course.

As the maiden beckoned to him he returned and relieved her of the tiller, and then calling forward ordered the lookout to haul down the jib-sheet, for that sail was flapping violently, when, turning to speak to the girl, he found her no longer at his side, but in a moment saw a dim, mysterious light under the schooner's counter, and just then a light wherry shot off over the waves, the girl being seated at the oars and pulling away over the stormy sea as indifferently as if on the most placid inland lake.

The lad could not comprehend it, and being just then relieved of his trick at the wheel, leaned over the side in deep thought, when he saw somebody struggling in the water, when, cutting the life-buoy loose and calling out "Man overboard!" he plunged into the sea and arrived just in time.

Again the Indian grasped his hand and again thanked him, as he had a thousand times; but the lad blushed like a girl, and saying that it was time to turn in, walked aft to the binnacle, and then with a pleasant "good-night" to the man at the wheel, descended to the cabin where his bunk was—he being first mate of the Spray, as the schooner was called, paused for an instant, while a smile played about his lips, to gaze at the little child he had saved, for whom a comfortable bed had been made upon the cabin floor.

But as he looked there was a sudden uproar on deck; the rudder-chains rattled as in answer to a shout from the lookout of "Hard-a-lee!" came the response "Ay, ay, sir," and the wheel spun round, just as there came a tremendous thud that threw him off his feet, followed by a crashing and a tearing sound that was fairly sickening, while the little schooner heeled over, and over, until she lay on her beam-ends and then began to settle, slowly but surely, down to the bottom of the ever-voracious sea, and the water came pouring in through the companion-way, flooding the cabin and startling the child from her deep slumber.

The storm-lantern, swinging in the little cabin, cast a dim, sickly light, and the little girl, seeing the lad, stretched out her little hands to him with a piteous appeal for help; so scrambling to her as best he might, he raised and clasped her in his strong young arms, and then, struggling through the streaming flood, was pitched headlong into the ocean, as the vessel lurched and then went down, forever lost to the sight of man, dragging him deep under the water with the suction caused by her sinking.

But, powerful swimmer as he was, he did not remain long under water, and rising to the surface, shook the water from his head as a Newfoundland dog shakes the drops from his shaggy coat, and looked about him.

Scudding off, without delaying her course to see what damage she had wrought, what assistance her crew might render to the poor unfortunates struggling in the pitiless waters, was a full-rigged ship, carrying a cloud of canvas, even in that gale, and staggering under its weight like a drunken man, while the water boiled and bubbled away from her bows, leaving a long line of foam in her wake.

Hurling a malediction after her from between his clinched teeth, the lad, noting a strange, fierce light that illumined the heavens a half-mile from where he was struggling, struck out in that direction, wondering, even amid his efforts, which were almost superhuman, what mystery this could be.

He realized that he must be somewhere in the vicinity of Bell-Point Light, but surely no lamp in Government light-house ever gave forth such a glare as that; yet this was no time for conjectures. But at the same time he could but feel discouraged at this second coming upon this point, for in beating up the coast it had been necessary to approach and leave the light many times, and at the first approach he had been saved from wreck by mysterious interposition, while the second time found him struggling in the water. A weakness came over him, a roaring that came not altogether from the beating waters sounded in his ears, and he was fast losing consciousness when a dim, subdued light stole over the waters toward him and a light boat approached rapidly, with no sound of oars, and reaching his side, the Indian maiden who had before aided him leaned over, lifted the exhausted child into the boat, and motioned the lad to climb over the stern, aiding him materially with her slight strength, for he was so exhausted that it was with the greatest difficulty that he scrambled in, when he fell to the bottom of the boat, completely worn out.

But the oarsman, if such the girl can be called, paid no attention to him, but bent resolutely to her work, and the little boat bounded over the waves, dancing like a cork over the tumbling waters, until finally it drew into a little cove, sheltered from the winds, where its bow grated on the shelving beach, when the boy, rested by this time, raised himself to his feet, lifted the child in his arms and stepped out onto the sand, the little girl nestling close to him, and closely wrapped in a warm shawl which the Indian girl had produced from some mysterious

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recess and had wrapped around her, and which warmed and comforted her.

Before the lad could turn to thank the girl, the boat was backed out and in an instant disappeared around the jutting bluff that sheltered the cove.

And the little girl, clasping her warm, embracing, tiny little hands close, looked up in his face and lisped:

"I love 'oo! What is 'oo name?"

And the lad, kissing the golden hair of the little angel, answered tenderly:

"They call me 'Luke, the Life-Saver,' my little pet."

"Then you are just the lad we're arter, so come along, my cherub, and don't ride rusty," said a gruff voice close to his ear, as a heavy hand was laid on his shoulder, and the sharp click of a revolver sounded close to his ear.

Luke was in the hands of the Wreckers of the Bell-Point Light, his deadliest enemies, and whom he had often thwarted in their evil plans.

CHAPTER IV.

DEFTANCE!

LUKE must perforce submit, for the cold ring of steel was pressed close to his temple, and he realized that resistance meant instant death, so, with no demur, he submitted with the best grace he could command to the rough handling which he had to undergo before he was as firmly bound as his captors thought necessary to prevent his escape.

Following his captors for some little distance, still carrying the little Lillian in his arms, they suddenly stopped and roughly bandaged his eyes, after which a rough hand was laid on each shoulder and he was shoved rather than led along, stumbling over the rocks that incumbered the path that they were traversing, which led led up the side of the bluff.

Soon he was ordered to stoop, and not obeying very promptly, received a sharp blow on his forehead from which the blood began to trickle, so bending low, in this uncomfortable position he was marched for some distance until at length the sound of boisterous laughter and the light that pierced the bandage over his eyes led him to believe that they had arrived at their destination.

And such was the case, for the strip of canvas being untied, a glare of light burst upon him, dazzling and confusing him for a moment, until his eyes became accustomed to the blaze, when he looked around him.

He found himself in a large vaulted chamber, hewn out of the solid rock, and in the presence of fifteen or twenty men, who were scattered about, some playing cards and wrangling and jangling over their gains and losses; others drinking deeply from huge goblets, which they replenished from time to time from casks and barrels ranged along the rocky walls around the hall, while scattered here and there and lying on bales of merchandise, carpets and rich shawls, were half a dozen of the band, who had succumbed either to the fumes of the liquor they had drank, or to fatigue, and were fast asleep.

Seated apart, in front of a magnificent mahogany desk, which had been plundered from some ill-fated vessel, lured to her destruction by the false signals displayed by the wreckers, the papers he was consulting lit up by two massive six-branched candelabra, containing the finest wax candles, sat the man who, from his dress and general air of authority, seemed the chief, in deep consultation with one of his band, who, almost effeminate in appearance, lounged in a satin-covered arm-chair, while he daintily toyed with his cigarette.

The means of illumination in the cavern were as diversified as were the different types of men scattered about; here hung a storm-lantern giving forth a smoky flame; there a silver lamp intended by some pious soul as a votive offering to Our Lady of the seas, but plundered to illumine the wrecker's cave; alongside was the modern and mischievous kerosene lamp, while dangling about and throwing grotesque shadows from the still more grotesque figures painted on them.

Chests of tea jostled barrels of pork; Persian shawls hobnobbed with the products of Irish looms, while erected in one corner was a huge Chinese Joss, or idol, *vis-à-vis* to an oil-painting representing Danaë in the Shower of Gold. Oriental luxury and profusion, waste and careless display—the cave was a very mine of wealth!

At the sound made by the entering footsteps, the captain turned, and seeing Luke standing in the center of the hall, yet bound, he asked in a stern, cruel tone, that well fitted his forbidding aspect:

"What have you there, Ransom?"

Obsequiously doffing his sou'wester, the man addressed, who was none other than Luke's captor, replied in whining tones:

"A night-prowler, most noble Captain Wrake, and none other than our old friend—Luke, the Life-Saver!"

As if the ocean, whose presence above was denoted by the streams of water which trickled down through the numerous seams and fissures in the rock overhead, had burst through, the whole band, with the exception of the dandy in

the arm-chair, sprung to their feet, and many a hand sought pistol and knife as they glared at the defenseless youth.

But the captain, glaring around, commanded silence, and again addressed Ransom:

"And where found you him?"

"In the neighborhood of Sandy Cove, wringing wet as you see him, captain, and with the child in his arms. He has evidently suffered shipwreck, I should th—"

"Keep your opinions to yourself until they are asked for," thundered Wrake, and turning to the boy he addressed him:

"What were you doing and how came you there, boy?"

"I answer no questions while bound like a criminal. By what authority do you thus make me prisoner?" haughtily returned the lad, as he drew himself proudly up.

"Take care; take care, my fine fellow," cautioned Wrake, as a dark and angry flush overspread his features. "When tongues wag too loosely here, we have means of stopping them."

"Yours the power; I say no more till loosened," and the boy turned away indifferently, his bound hands, tied in front of him, still supporting the child, whose blue eyes grew bluer as she watched this scene, yet uttered never a sound.

"Unbind him," ordered the chief, curtly; and in an instant a keen knife had severed the cords, and the boy stood free.

"Now, then—how came you by that child, and how came you here?"

"I rescued the child from the waves; the schooner I was on was afterward run down by an unknown ship; I was picked up by an Indian maiden, in a light wherry, and landed where your fellow-robber found me."

At the name of the Indian maiden there was an evident sensation in the band, and some of the men shrunk back, as fearing the person whom she had taken under her protection; but at the word "robber" the chief scowled still more deeply, yet restrained his passion once again.

"Truly a dainty creature you have there. Say, my little one, will you stay with us and be our little queen? See what I can give you," and drawing from the desk behind him a mass of unset jewels he poured them from one hand to the other, their cut surfaces sparkling and glowing in the many different lights with all the colors of the rainbow; the sight was a dazzling one, and for a moment the child was entranced.

Sliding from Luke's arms, he willingly submitting her to the test to see whether she would come out of the crucible of temptation dross or pure gold, with finger on lip, eyes wide-open, she advanced step by step toward the glistening shower; but suddenly she stopped, hesitated, looked up in the dark face before her, and then, turning, leaped into Luke's arms, her golden curls shining and falling over her pretty face, while she poutingly lisped:

"Do 'way, bad man; me hate 'oo; me love Luke," while the boisterous laughter of the wild crew, delighted at their chief's discomfiture, rung loudly through the vaulted cabin.

Without a word the captain returned the jewels to his desk, several of them rolling unheeded to the floor, and then, his face pale with anger, he strode toward the trembling child, trembling with fear now for the first time, and put out his hands to seize her, crying, with an oath and in a deep voice that proved how deeply rage had taken possession of him:

"By Heaven, you shall give me a kiss, my baby, if you won't have my jewels!" and he grasped the tender infant—for infant she was, but six summers having shed their dews on her sunny head—roughly by the arm, his cruel fingers sinking deeply into the delicate flesh, and leaving marks that were visible for many a long day afterward.

At the movement Luke drew back a pace; then, springing forward with the agility of the monarch of the forest leaping on his prey, he struck Wrake such a telling blow, fair between the eyes, that he dropped backward as if smitten by a bolt from heaven, and lay insensible on the floor, while the young life-saver, grasping a revolver from his belt as he lay there, sprung to the corner of the hall, and, placing the girl behind him, leveled his weapon and cried in his clear, ringing young tones:

"Move but a hand, any one of you, and you die like dogs, as you are!"

CHAPTER V.

THE TRAIL OF THE BLOODHOUND.

FOR a moment the wreckers gazed at each other open-mouthed with wonder at the audacity of this mere boy—who dared thus brave them in their own den.

They realized that it was as much as their lives were worth to stir a finger, for there was no mistaking the accents of the lad's voice, and they remained quiet, glaring in impotent fury at the deadly barrel which confronted them; and so the tableau remained for several minutes, and a thrilling picture it presented. The captain lying insensible in the middle of the cavern, stretched out on the rocky floor; the wreckers crouching in varied attitudes in different por-

tions of the cavern; the different lights reflected from the various articles of precious metal that were scattered about—all added to the picturesqueness of the scene, while the little child, with horror in her eyes, clung closer to the boy, half-sheltering herself behind his upright form, which, steady as the rock beneath his feet, never trembled an atom.

But, suddenly there was an interruption. Bounding into the rock-hewn cavern, with long leaps, such as the spring of a panther, came Winnemuka, his hair streaming behind him, his eyes flashing fire, a long knife in his hand, the blade of which, dripping with blood, proved that he had passed the sentinel at the entrance at the cost of the latter's life, and his whole appearance showing that long years of civilization had not been able to quench the savage fires in his breast which he had inherited from his ancestors, and, his quick glance catching Luke and his charge, in an instant he was beside them, had caught up the little one, who sprung to his arms with a cry of joy, and, dashing through the crowd of bandits, whom he scattered right and left—they cowering and shrinking from the red blade in his hand—he plunged beneath a magnificent piece of tapestry which covered the rocky wall opposite the place where he had entered, and disclosed a narrow passage, from which issued no ray of light; and into this, closely followed by Luke, he rushed without hesitating an instant, while the tapestry, falling back into its place, left them in total darkness.

So sudden had been the entrance of the Indian, so rapid had been his exit that the wreckers had not time to collect their thoughts, and before they could act, the trio had disappeared, leaving the baffled crew behind them—all but one. The effeminate youth who had been in consultation with the captain and who had, during all of these occurrences, remained seated, surveying the scene with a sneering smile, as if mocking at the cowardly crew who were thus held at bay by a boy, rose quickly and quietly as Luke passed by him, and with noiseless feet sped after the fugitives, following so closely after the lad that he passed under the tapestry before it had fallen into its place, and like a shadow followed.

Steadily pursuing his way, Winnemuka, who seemed perfectly familiar with the intricacies of the passage, held out a guiding hand, which Luke took, and turned suddenly to the right, and hardly had they entered the lateral passage, when there was a crash and a roar, heightened a thousand-fold by the confined limits within which the explosion took place, and a dozen bullets pattered against the rock, at the end of the passage they had just left; the wreckers had fired a volley after them and they had branched off just in time to save their lives.

As the noise of the rifle-shots died away, the quick ear of Luke caught a slight noise behind him; the sound of some person breathing, and, knowing that they were followed, without an instant's hesitation he threw himself on the ground as noiselessly as the autumn leaf touched by the frost falls to the sward below; and at the same time a light foot encountered his body, so closely was he followed, and the pursuer fell headlong to the rocks, while almost before he had measured his length, Luke had encircled his neck with his sinewy grasp and was gradually but surely choking the breath and life from his body.

But, as they struggled and rolled in this death embrace, the little form of his antagonist displayed a strength that was surprising to Luke in one so slender; the wrecker managed to free himself from Luke's grasp, slipping from between his fingers like an eel, and, with a mocking laugh fled, while the lad, fearing that he might bring the band in his pursuit, hurriedly rose to his feet and struck along the path as rapidly as the intense darkness and the roughness of the path would admit, his hands outstretched for fear of encountering some obstacle against which he might dash himself and cause him serious injury; so, with ear on the alert for any pursuing footstep, with eyes staring into the black space before him, he hurried along until his fingers came in contact with the damp wall, and he felt to the right and left for the continuation of the passage; but, grope as he would, he could find no outlet. Falling on hands and knees, thinking that there might be some passage cut through the rock close to the path, he felt carefully in every direction, but no means of continuing his flight could he discover.

Suddenly he started back in horror, for as he crawled on, his outstretched hand encountered no support and he well-nigh plunged into a pit which yawned directly before him from the depths of which came a hollow sound as a stone loosened by him fell clattering against the sides of the shaft, finally striking against the waters far below with a subdued splash, which showed to what an immense depth it had fallen.

Luke drew back and crouched close to the rocks, for the blackness was now filled with horror, and his distorted imagination caused him to picture pitfalls on every side, and that the slightest movement would dash him to eternity.

Then there came a deep baying to his ears, echoing along through the entrails of the earth, and he realized that the wreckers had turned

loose upon his trail an enormous bloodhound, which he had noticed chained in one corner of the vaulted chamber, and then indeed he gave himself up for lost, for in the struggle which had taken place his pistol had dropped from the bosom of his shirt and he was entirely unarmed; but there was no escape—on one side the yawning chasm, on the other, and rapidly approaching, the ferocious brute, ravening for his blood; so dropping on one knee he hastily tore his jacket from his shoulders and wrapping it around his left arm assumed the defensive.

Nearer and nearer echoed the deep baying of the brute, until finally the pattering of his claws sounded close in front of the lad, and the greenish glare of his eyes could be seen like two emeralds, burning through the thick darkness, and with a fierce growl he sprang upon Luke, his gnashing fangs burying themselves deep in his arm, through the protecting jacket, while the heavy shock from his leaping body threw the boy back, until he lay with his head hanging over the pit behind him.

And then began a life-and-death struggle for the brave lad, his courage completely restored in presence of this new danger which confronted him, and grasping the hound by the throat he endeavored to choke him to death, his hand buried to the wrist in the massive neck of the brute.

And so they fought, the huge fangs of the bloodthirsty creature tearing at the protecting jacket, which alone saved the lad's arm from being crushed and gnawed to shreds while the boy's nervous fingers clutched closer and closer around the windpipe of the dog, who even now began to show signs of weakness, and to struggle less violently than before to escape from this choking grasp.

But the tremendous weight of the bloodhound, and his fearful strength, began to tell on the boy also, who was weak from exposure, cold and hunger, as well as from his late battle with the waves, and he realized that if his life was to be saved he must put forth every exertion in one supreme effort; so, stretching out his other hand, he added its power to the one already clutching the throat of his brute antagonist, and put forth all of his strength to strangle him, and with success, for the hound gave one convulsive struggle and then fell across Luke's body, crushing his breath from his chest and lying dead; but as he died he gave a terrific leap, and the shock pushed Luke still further over the brink of the chasm; he struggled in vain to recover his equilibrium; he was overbalanced, and, sliding over the brink, he fell, still clutching the dead body, into the depths below.

CHAPTER VI.

THE WRECK OF THE CIRCASSIAN.

In a magnificent house on Fifth avenue, near Madison square, on a dark night in March, 187—, a dim light was visible in a small room adjoining the parlor, and here was seated in front of a writing-desk an elderly gentleman whose brow was furrowed with the lines graven by care and sorrow, while his whole appearance was that of a man who had passed his seventieth year, though the frost of but fifty-five winters had silvered his hair.

He was alone in the house, save for the servants, asleep in the upper rooms, and was engaged in examining some documents that were spread on the desk before him, one of which, a letter bearing a foreign post-mark, was thus written:

"CANTON, China, October 15, 187—.

"MY DEAREST FATHER:—

To day I was married—married to the noble man I met on the steamer, while crossing to Liverpool, and who was returning to this port to take command of a ship that had been offered him, and of whom I wrote to you, just after touching at Gibraltar.

"Following the physician's advice regarding a long sea voyage, I determined to 'round the Cape of Good Hope,' as my nautical husband puts it, and the world of good it has done my dear little sister will cause your heart to leap with joy when you see her, for she is a changed being, and was the idol of the entire ship's company.

"We sail in November for New York, and I hope to see your dear face again by March or April next—possibly sooner.

"In the mean time, I pray to God to keep you and Irene, and with much love to her and to your dear self, am

"YOUR DEVOTED DAUGHTER."

"Ah!" sighed the old man, "married, and against my wishes, yet she says not one word of the cruel letter I wrote her. Please Heaven she never received it, for it would be better so. I will gladly forgive the child—for child she is, and welcome her and her husband with open arms, for I am alone!"

"It is now four o'clock, and the Circassian, on which Irene and her aunt cross, sails at five. God grant them a safe and prosperous voyage! Ah!" and as a keen blade sunk to the hilt between his shoulders, the old man fell forward on his desk, the blood from the wound welling out, trickling down and staining the papers before him.

"A leetle hasty, Jim," remarked one of two men who had stolen in unperceived, the sound of their footsteps deadened by the heavy carpet; "but it's done, an' so let it go. Now for the swag," and the two masked burglars ransacked the drawers of the desk, finding ample

payment for the risk they had run, in the small iron safe beneath the secretary, the compartments of which were stuffed with bank-notes.

Then grasping the papers which littered the desk, and which might prove of some value, the two villains departed, escaping from the house as stealthily as they had come, closing the basement window, by which they had entered, and sliding the bolt with a knife-blade, so that it was impossible for any one to detect how they had succeeded in penetrating into the house.

The sun rose and peered in through the window, and glinted in the pool of blood that lay clotted on the floor, and the noises of the night gave way to those of the day, when the servant, entering the room for the purpose of airing it, gave one scream of horror, and then, terror-stricken, ran screaming into the street, awakening a policeman from his morning nap, and rousing the neighborhood with her cries, while the sky soon became overcast, and a dense snow-storm came up, the wind driving the white flakes before it in pelting drifts, and wailing over the housetops.

The usual inquest followed, and the usual verdict was rendered: "Killed by some person or persons unknown;" and the funeral took place; the house was closed; the wonder over the mystery of the awful deed soon gave place to some new sensation, and Mr. Faulconer was forgotten.

Promptly at five o'clock on the same morning, the steamship Circassian cast loose from her moorings, and at half-speed, moved down the bay, bound for Liverpool, with a full cabin and a weighty cargo.

Standing under the lee of the funnel, where she was sheltered from the biting breeze which swept down upon the steamer from the southwest, was a tall, slender girl elegantly clad, and warmly wrapped in costly sealskins. Her bright young face, of witching beauty, was rosy with the flush of health, her color being heightened by the kiss of the frost, and as she stood there she was the personification of girlish loveliness; for she was not more than fifteen.

Waiting for the dawn to break, that she might gaze once more on the city where she had passed so many happy hours, and where her lonely father was even now, perhaps, thinking of, and praying for her, she could not repress a tear that welled in her forget-me-not-hued eyes and stole slowly down her cheek.

"Poor father!" she murmured; "how desolate he must feel; but sister will soon be home now, to cheer him, and will fill all the void which my leaving may have caused; and if aunt Ida's health is soon restored she will not be long abroad, and then what a happy home we will have!"

"How I long to see my new brother-in-law! Ah, the first tinge of light, and now for a last look at dear New York, and a good, long one. Good-by, Manhattan, dear, and dearest papa, farewell!" and kissing the pretty tips of her fingers, the young girl descended to the cabin, and disrobing, was soon fast asleep, while the propeller throbbed and the huge frame of the mighty ship trembled beneath its pulsations as she leaped onward through the foaming waters, her prow pointed due east.

The sun rose, and to the ordinary observer would have presaged a clear day, but there was a cold, frosty look about the disk that, to the experienced sailors, gave warning of unpleasant weather; and the captain, walking the bridge, declined to set any sail, although the breeze blew steadily and strongly from a favoring direction, directly across her beam; yet he decided that it would only be a matter of a few hours, in any case, and that the sails would have to be furled almost as soon as set.

While the steamer was steadily pursuing her way, a commotion was heard in the steerage, and at the sound of the confusion, the captain, leaning over the railing, looked down upon the deck, but supposing that it was some of the steerage passengers skylarking, turned and resumed his march up and down the bridge, his telescope under his arm, anxiously watching the mass of clouds which was banking high up in the southern sky, the black masses tipped with great creamy piles of cloud, which were sure precursors of a blow.

But with a wild yell, a gaunt, unkempt, ragged giant, with unshorn locks and straggling beard sprung on deck, armed with a hand-spike, with which he felled the second officer, who endeavored to stop him, and leaping up the steps which led to the bridge, seized the captain around the waist, pinning his arms to his side, and with a maniacal yell, sprang overboard with his victim, and disappeared beneath the green waters that were rushing past the ship's side!

The discipline on the steamer was perfect, and as the two struck the water, the fearful cry rung over the decks—"Man overboard!" and with a leap, the chief engineer who was just coming on deck, reached the electric indicator, and turning the handle to "Stop her!" the bell rung out the warning below, while, as the huge screw ceased its beats, the bell sounded a second signal "Back her!" and the water, churned into a milky foam, rushed past the

steep sides of the vessel, boiling and bubbling like a witch's caldron.

While the engineer was busy with these maneuvers, a trained crew had sprung into two of the boats that had been lowered, and with the first and third officers had pulled hurriedly away in the direction of the spot where the maniac and his prey had disappeared. But their search was of no avail, for except a dark blood-stain which dyed the dancing waters, showing that the iron screw must have struck one or both of them, no trace could be found, and they turned to row toward the steamer, which lay a half-mile away.

At that moment the snow-squall, which had been threatening for some time, swooped down upon them with its full force, and in an instant the boats were overturned, being broadside to the gale, and officers and sailors were struggling in the water, while so dense was the storm of driving flakes that they were completely hidden from the view of those on the steamer, and in a few moments had sunk, to rise no more.

Meantime all on board the Circassian had rushed on deck (for the stopping of the machinery means, in almost every case at sea, some accident) and were gathered aft near the wheel-house, watching the boats, while the chief engineer, now in command (as the second officer had been carried below with his skull crushed) gave orders to go ahead slowly, as he saw the squall coming and knew that they must have steerage-way on the steamer to prevent her drifting; but as the squall struck them it was found necessary to go ahead, full speed, and as the vessel, without an officer on board capable of navigating her, forged ahead, the engineer felt his responsibility and determined to put back to New York.

But as he gave his orders, and the steamer in obedience to her helm swung slowly around in the blinding snow, a harsh, grating sound was heard that set the teeth of all on edge, and before the propeller could be stopped she was hard and fast in the sand, and the tide running in, aided by the waves which rapidly rose, soon fixed the doomed steamer firmly on the bank, while the mizzenmast, loosened by the shock, went by the board, killing three of the sailors as it fell, and the waters, lashed into fury, with extraordinary rapidity began to pour over the stern, until a larger wave than those preceding, dashing high over the bulwarks, caught Irene Faulconer in its icy embrace and swept her off into the swirling sea.

CHAPTER VII.

SNATCHED FROM THE WAVES.

AS Luke fell down through the sickening depths his consciousness half-deserted him, and he gave himself up for lost, expecting to be dashed to pieces either against the rocky sides of the pit or against the cruel rocks at the bottom; but he had short time for dread—for the shock soon came—the shock of plunging into water of icy coldness, which restored his senses in an instant, and in a moment he was on his feet, standing hip-deep in a running stream and listening to the sound of falling water some distance to the left and behind him; he had fallen a distance of twenty feet, though it seemed to him that he was falling thousands.

The mystery of the falling stone was explained when he took the body of the dead brute, which still clung with its fangs to his jacket—the garment being still tightly wrapped about his arm—and flung it in the direction of the sound of falling waters, where it went plunging down apparently to a tremendous depth.

The pit into which he had fallen seemingly had two bottoms, one far below, into which some subterranean stream was flowing, and the one on which he stood, the water which covered it issuing from the rock near where he was standing, and having another outlet, for the current was swift and strong and flowed away in a different direction from the other chasm. To this stream he was about to intrust himself, when, for the third time, he saw approaching up the stream in which he was standing that mysterious light which had twice before appeared to him, and rapidly gliding up the stream came the Indian maiden, her light wherry shooting up against the current beneath the vigorous strokes of the oars.

In a moment more she was alongside him, and by the dim yet penetrating light shed around he was able to examine his surroundings.

The pit into which he had fallen was some twenty feet in circumference, and he stood in a rushing river of half that breadth, while, wading off to the right, he found a natural parapet of rock which kept the water within bounds, it just rising to the edge, while on the other side of the stony wall, which was two or three feet in thickness, was the chasm into which he had hurled the hound.

Turning, he saw that the Indian girl was beckoning him to enter the wherry, which he quickly did, while, as soon as he was seated, the boat was turned in the direction whence it had come. The rocky passage narrowed and lowered till there was just room to use the oars and avoid the roof by bending, and this subterranean journey they pursued for some time—hours.

seemed to Luke, who was chattering with the cold and faint with hunger, excitement and exposure.

But there was nothing to be done, Luke having come to the conclusion that the girl was a deaf-mute, she not having made the slightest sign when he had addressed her; so the boat sped on until at length it stopped. In front Luke could see that the waters were banked up so as to almost stop the passageway, and it was certain that the boat could not pass without being submerged until the water ran over the gunwale; but as the girl sat quietly indifferent the boy decided to await the course of events patiently.

Apparently seeing how tired he was, the girl motioned him to lie down in the bottom of the boat while she seated herself in the bow. Nothing loth, Luke complied, and in an instant dropped off into a profound slumber, so utterly fatigued and used-up was he.

How long he slept he never knew; but when he awoke he found himself lying in a rough bunk, warmly covered up, his clothes having been removed, while the regular motion, the swaying to and fro, the "swish" of the water as it rushed past the side of the bunk, were signs sufficient to show that he was on board of some vessel, he knew not what, bound he knew not whither; nor did he care, so long as he was not in the power of the murderous wreckers.

Soon the door of the little cabin was opened, and a rough, but kindly-looking sailor poked his head in and called out in a cheery voice as he caught Luke's eye:

"Hey, mate; slept your watch out, hain't ye? If ye're rested, turn out and take a mouthful o' this."

And, entering, he placed on a locker a savory-smelling tin of chowder, which caused Luke to leap from his bunk and to commence gulping it down in huge spoonfuls, while an occasional sip from a stiff glass of grog washed it down to perfection, the sailor, in the mean time, disappearing and returning with the boy's clothes, which had been nicely dried by the galley-fire.

Luke was soon dressed and on deck, when he found that he was on board of a large coaster, laden with coals and close-hauled, bound for Sag Harbor, being at the time he came from below just off Fort Pond, on the northern shore of Long Island and close inshore.

Walking up to the one who seemed to be in command, he thanked him and asked him how he came on board, when it was explained to him that the Eliza Lee had anchored off the Connecticut shore, the night being stormy, and had laid all night riding out the gale.

As day broke and the gale subsided, they were preparing to heave anchor and set sail, when one of the men had descried a body lying on shore, and thinking it might be a shipwrecked sailor, had taken the boat, found Luke lying there, and brought him aboard, removed his clothes, and left him to sleep off his fatigue.

Luke thanked him again, wondering how they had passed out through the narrow passage left by the waters, acknowledged that he had been shipwrecked, and was turning away to say a word to the man who had rescued him, when the wind jumped to the east, "boxing the compass," as it is called, and without an instant's warning the heavy boom swung over, striking the captain, who had leaped on the gunwale to examine something, holding loosely to the sheet, across the back and knocking him into the water.

In a moment Luke was by his side and supporting him in the water, for the sailor was almost insensible from the force of the blow, and, the land being near, began to swim in that direction, realizing that it would be some time before the coaster's crew would be able to bring her about or lower the boat, which was on deck and not swinging in davits.

It was an easy swim for the lad, even with the weight he carried, and in a few moments the unconscious sailor was laid on the shelving beach, and Luke was bathing his face and rubbing his back with such good results that in a short time the sailor was almost completely restored.

The boat arriving soon after, he was placed therein, when Luke bade him farewell, having something to attend to on the south side of the island at Amagansett; but the old salt was loth to part with him, and grasping his hand heartily, said:

"Ye saved my life, lad, an' but for you I'd 'a' been drowned long ago; I'm not much given to talkin', but if ye ever want a friend come to the harbor an' ask fur ole Bill Freeman, an' if one man kin sarve another, that sarvice I'll do fur you!"

And it was with something like tears in his eyes that the brave old fellow shook Luke's hand and gave the word to his men to "pull away."

Luke started off briskly across the country, and, being completely restored by his long sleep and the food and drink furnished him, walked steadily on until he arrived at his destination just as the stars were beginning to twinkle in the sky and the lamps in the windows of the villagers. It was a sad coming, for he bore a sorrowful message for a widowed mother whose

only son had gone down with the schooner Spray when she had been run down; yet he told her the tale as tenderly as he could, and promised that, as Hiram Foster had been his messmate and best friend, she should never want so long as he, Luke, had a cent to give her.

He was the widow's guest that night, and when he left the kind-hearted old lady kissed her as he would have kissed his mother, and promised that he would soon return.

As he walked along the sands he passed by a life-saving station and stopped to say a word to the men, looking at the apparatus and admiring the brave fellows who thus risked their lives to save those of others, then pursued his journey; but, as he arrived at Bridgehampton, he found all bustle and confusion at the station, and in answer to his question came the startling reply as the snow and sleet lashed and stung him, a storm having sprung up in a moment:

"A large steamer ashore, just off here," pointing to the southeast.

In an instant Luke was at the water's edge, gazing out to sea with straining eyes, and as he looked he saw floating on the water what he thought was a human form, and casting off his shoes and a jacket given him on the coaster, he plunged into the tumbling breakers amid the cheers of the assembled crowd, and toiling and struggling reached the girl—for such it was—and amid the mad buffeting of the waters and lashing of the spray, wounded and bleeding from a blow from some floating wreckage, he drew her safely to shore, where a dozen willing hands bore them far beyond the reach of the waves as he fell exhausted on the sand by the side of Irene Faulconer.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LIFE AND DEATH CAR.

WHEN, finally, the two were restored—the saved and the savior—night had begun to spread its raven pinions over land and sea, while, with the darkness, came yet fiercer gusts of wind that shook the life-saving station into which they had been carried from roof to foundation. The driving sleet, freezing as it fell, covered field and road with a coat of glassy ice, and no living thing could make ready headway against the gale that drove the sea high up on the beach.

Luke, now warmly dressed in clothes kept on hand at the station for persons rescued from the ocean and protected from the driving storm by a complete suit of oilskins, started for the beach, where could be heard the roar of the mortar, as the crew tried, time and again, to throw a life-line across the vessel; but without avail, for as the line was coiled on the beach, previous to firing the shot, the drifting sand quickly covered it, and the rope, being buried deep, retarded the free flight of the shot and caused it to drop into the sea before it had traversed half the distance.*

And during all this time the sea was rolling higher and higher, and the mad breakers, tumbling their tons of water with tremendous thuds onto the beach, made it impossible to launch the life-boat, while the shrieks and cries that swept over the boiling surges from the wrecked steamer rung in the ears of the life-savers and drove them almost insane as they realized how powerless they were to aid their suffering fellow-creatures who were in such sore distress and peril.

And as the boy stood there, partly sheltered from the cutting wind by a sand-dune, and watched the vain efforts of the brave men who were unconscious of their suffering from cold and wet as they struggled with the elements, he could restrain himself no longer, and tearing off his oilskins and outer garments, leaped to the mortar, his sinewy, well-knit figure trembling with excitement, and as the crew were drawing in the shot, after another vain endeavor to fire it over the steamer, he cried, in loud, piercing tones:

"Give me the line; I will carry it to yonder vessel, or perish in the attempt!"

For a moment they gazed at him in astonishment, scarcely believing their ears, for it seemed the height of madness for any one to venture into the raging and whirling waters, while it was more than probable that the swimmer would not be able to penetrate the first line of breakers, but would be dashed up onto the beach despite every effort to swim out to sea, while the ice-cold waters would chill him and freeze his limbs into stiffness and uselessness.

But as the end of the line to which was fastened the chain that was attached to the shot came dragging up through the wet sand, being hauled in by the men, the young life-saver, detaching it, tied a bow-line, and slipping it under his shoulders, around his body, secured it beneath his arms. And then, without another word, the daring Luke plunged headlong into the huge breaker that was just beginning to curl before breaking, and rising on the other side plunged through another and still another,

*Since the time during which these events occurred all this has been rectified, and an invention has been perfected whereby the life-line is coiled on pegs set in a box, and the rope, slipping freely, retards in not the slightest degree the flight of the shot.

until he got beyond the shallow waters, and swam steadily on over the swelling seas, through whitecaps, fighting against wind and tide with set teeth and tense muscles, and putting forth superhuman efforts to overcome the forces which were dragging him back, but without avail, and he was finally dashed high on the beach far from the point where he had plunged into the sea, for the southwest wind had caused a current which set strongly to the east and which had drifted him far in that direction and then tossed him on shore.

A short rest, covered with the blankets the life-crew had brought from the station, and then, profiting by his experience, he walked up the beach to the westward, that the current might not drift him past the steamer, and then he for the second time that night dove headlong into the chilling waves, and, diving and swimming, got far out from the shore, propelled by the vigorous strokes of his sinewy arms.

At times he disappeared altogether, and it seemed as if he must perish, but quickly rising to the surface he struck out with renewed strength as he saw that he was gradually approaching the steamer, whose location was marked by the blue lights which were kept steadily burning at her bow, until, reaching the lee of the vessel, in answer to his hail a line was lowered, and swinging to this, he was quickly lifted on board amid the ringing yell of glad surprise from all present—a cry that was heard on shore, and signaled to them that the boy had succeeded in carrying out his most desperate undertaking in the face of obstacles which would have intimidated one less brave.

Three stout jerks were then given on the line which he had brought with him, and throwing a heavy pea-jacket about his shoulders he awaited the answering signal, which soon came in the shape of a whizzing rocket that broke into a shower of sparks far overhead, and in obedience to this some of the crew began to haul in the line, and after a few minutes of steady pulling brought on board a huge block or pulley, through which was rove a stout cable.

To this was fastened a smaller line. Attached to the block was a square piece of tin on which were painted directions in English, French and German how to proceed when the block should be drawn on board; so, in accordance with these instructions, a half-dozen of the crew, dragging the heavy cable after them, ascended to the fore-top and there firmly lashed and fastened the pulley, when an answering rocket was sent up from the ship, and Luke, pulling on the smaller line hand over hand, soon brought the life-car close to where he was standing, it traveling on the cable which was tautened by a windlass on shore.

Then he superintended the embarkation of the first load, the women and children by his orders—for every one deferred to him—being sent ashore before a man was allowed to enter the car; and not one of the poor creatures passed him without taking his hand and kissing it, while more than one tear coursed freely down their cheeks, furrowing its way through the salt brine incrusts on their faces, as they burst into expressions of gratitude to their "noble preserver," as they called him, and the little children were held up to lip their childish thanks.

The steamer was fast breaking up, and the waves hurrying in from the ocean made a clean breach over her stern, and although the car traveled rapidly to and fro, the danger threatened that the vessel would go to pieces before all could be saved, so violently did she pound on the sands, as the incoming tide lifted her higher and yet higher on the bar where she had grounded.

The wind increased in its fury, the driving sleet and spray covered everything with a thick coating of ice; the mountain sea dashed higher and higher, at times completely covering Luke as, lashed to the rigging, he calmly directed the movements of the passengers and crew.

But as a louder crash than any that had preceded it called the attention of those remaining on board to the stern of the steamer, it was seen that the wheel-house, situated well aft, had been carried away, and the seas, with nothing to obstruct their passage, were rolling over the taffrail, and in a few moments more had begun to sweep the deck from stem to stern.

Then the sailors, who until this time had been quietly assisting at the work of aiding the passengers to climb the shrouds and reach the fore-top, where they were placed in the life-car six at a time, lost their heads, and with oaths and cries vowed that their lives were as dear as those of the passengers, and that, as some of them had wives and children at home, so the women and children on board must give way to them.

"First come, first sarved, my good lads," that's my motto," howled one brawny giant, whose hairy breast, broad shoulders and brawny arms betokened the possession of unusual strength, "an' I'm goin' inter the car the nex' trip. Who follows me?"

And he sprang up the shrouds, followed by a half-dozen of the more evil of the crew, while the better spirits, afraid to interfere, shrunk from his path with cries of "Shame!" taking

particular care, however, that he should not discover who it was that spoke the word, for he was the terror of the steamer, and ruled the fore-castle with a hand of iron.

He looked a very demon incarnate as, with a short iron bar in his hand, he sprang up the rat-lines, his eyes bloodshot, his coarse hair and beard flying in the breeze and incrustated with the salt which matted the locks together, while Luke, high above him, looked around him for some means of defense, for he had sworn that no man should leave the vessel until the women and children were all safe on shore.

The storm-swept sky had cleared and the moon shone out brightly, being obscured only at intervals by the fast-flying clouds which rushed and rolled across her bright disk, and the wild scene was plainly visible in all its tumultuous confusion.

Search as he would, the boy could find nothing with which to protect himself, so, bracing his body, he prepared for the coming encounter, determined to defend the passage to the car, even with his life; but, as he leaned back, a swinging rope lashed him sharply across the face, and seizing it, he tied with nimble fingers, rendered expert by long training, a running bowline in the hempen corp, and as the head and shoulders of the giant rose before him he cast the noose about the muscular neck, and, placing both feet on the shoulders of the mutineer and swinging by his hands, gave a shove with all of his strength, and the sailor, who had raised the iron bar with both hands, swung off over the boiling sea, where he hung suspended at the end of the yard-arm, gurgling and gasping, while the encircling cord quickly choked him into insensibility.

"By the high heavens!" cried the boy, "take warning by your leader's fate, or the same will be yours!"

And as the frightened mob slunk back to the decks, he continued the embarkation of the passengers—the last of whom was soon set ashore. Then he allowed the crew to take their turn, and in a few moments more was alone, the last load having completely filled the car.

Again he drew back the car, and, entering it, closed the air-tight door and shot the bolt, waiting to be drawn to the beach, when the foremast suddenly snapped and fell by the board, and the cable parting, Luke was hurled into the leaping waters below, hermetically sealed in the life-car, which bade fair to become his coffin!

CHAPTER IX.

A FLAMING SHOWER.

FOR hours the girl lay there, unconscious, until the fresher air of the morning, streaming through the broken sash, aroused her; and, without rising, she endeavored to collect her thoughts, feeling weak and faint after the long swoon through which she had passed. As she raised her hands to press her throbbing temples, she sprang to her feet with a cry of horror, for one of them was red, and like a flash the memory of the last night's tragedy returned to her, as she recalled the figure that had confronted her when she had entered the lantern, while, at the same moment, her eye caught sight of the cold body, lying so still and motionless almost at her feet, while the white face, marked with a crimson streak which had crept down from the hole in his forehead, made the recollection of the drama, in which she had taken so prominent a part, still more vivid.

And then came to her a tightening of the heart, for she thought of her father and of his two fellow-keepers, and, with a feeling of dread at what she might discover, she descended the winding steps, and, arrived at the bottom, started back with a cry of horror which would have surdled the blood of any hearer; but alas! there was no living person near.

Lying almost at her feet was the body of her father, visible in the light that came through the half-opened door, from which the bolts had been torn by the wreckers when they had forced their entrance, and she threw herself down beside the body with wringing hands, low moans and inarticulate cries, while she endeavored to resuscitate him, but all in vain; the blow that had been struck with such malignant purpose had crashed through scalp and bone, and beaten the life out of the brain beneath, and as the girl realized this, the full force of the realization of her terrible position came upon her with fearful distinctness, for she was alone, far from help, and did not dare go in search of aid, as the light must be attended to, and she could not return before the shades of night would cause the home-faring mariners to scan the horizon for the beacon which would warn them to steer clear of the reefs and shoals which strewed the waters in the vicinity of Bell-Point Light.

For she realized that she was alone, believing that if the two keepers were alive, they would have reappeared before this, unless, indeed, they were held as prisoners, so that they would not interfere with the designs of the wreckers, of whom she had often heard her father speak, but none of whom she had ever seen.

But before she could care for the dead, duty must be attended to, and, being thoroughly familiar with the care of the lamps, she set about preparing them, fearing no interruption from

the wreckers; they were birds of evil-omen, and only left their dens and caves when the darkness should hide their evil deeds, and shunned the orb of day; so she went to the closet where were kept the supplies, and which was built into the base of the tower, and opened the door, only to start back with a second scream of horror, and shut out the awful sight with apron raised and pressed to her eyes, for she shuddered at the contact of her blood-stained hand, which had become crimsoned as she lay unconscious overhead, having fallen into the ruby pool which stained the stone floor of the lantern.

But, nerving herself, she reentered the closet in search of another sash, and fresh wicks for the lamps, turning her eyes from the ghastly sight which had presented itself as she had first opened the door; for, lying as they had fallen, one body across the other, were two bodies stark and stiff in death—the bodies of Tom Wilson, and his fellow-keeper, while the blood-stained gash in the back of the jacket of one, the knife haft—the blade being buried deep between the shoulders—planted in the body of the other, showed that they had been stabbed from behind and foully and treacherously murdered.

With trembling hands the girl collected the wicks, while deep sobs shook her slight frame, and she found the greatest difficulty in getting what she wanted, but finally succeeded, and laid the little package outside, and then re-entered the closet, to perform the hardest task of all, for in order to reach the sashes she had to remove the bodies to the vestibule outside. This task she performed to the utmost, as tenderly and reverently she dragged all that was left of what had been, twelve hours before, two strong and vigorous men; yet, with indomitable courage she persevered, until, with straightened limbs and closed eyes, the three corpses were laid out, one beside the other, along the cold stones, which were not half so chilling to the touch as they.

Then, with the greatest difficulty, she removed one of the heavy sashes from the store-room, and, panting and struggling, carried it up the interminable steps, often stopping to regain her breath, until finally she reached the lantern, and prepared to replace the shattered sash with the new one. But, first, she must rid her presence of her awful neighbor; so, opening one of the windows, she caught hold of the collar of the dead wrecker, and began to pull the body toward the open window.

When the light-house had been first built, it had been erected some feet from the edge of the bluff, which ran sheer down to the water's edge; but the beating of the waves had so worn away the stony ground that but a foot or two of level turf lay between the edge of the cliff and the base of the light-house, so that when she had lifted the body onto the railing of the iron balcony which encircled the lantern, and had given it a slight push, the corpse, falling, struck against the swelling sides of the tapering tower, and, bounding off, plunged into the waters far below, while Carrie Homer, as the girl had been baptized, turned to her labors with a sigh of relief.

The broken sash was soon removed and the other fastened in its place, being held by numerous iron buttons at top, sides and bottom, when the girl, stepping again onto the balcony, walked around the entire circumference of the light, looking in every direction. Not a living thing was in sight, so she again descended, and without a single glance at the dead trio, hurriedly left the light-house and sped to the house which stood some hundred yards away, and where were the sleeping and living apartments of those in charge of Bell-Point Light. Entering, she quickly packed a huge basket with all sorts of provisions, taking which, and throwing a large white spread over her arm, she returned to the tower.

Placing her basket at the foot of the steps, she knelt by her dead father and breathed a prayer for him and his dead comrades. Pressing a kiss on the marble brow, she wept silently for a few moments; then arose, covering the bodies with the white spread, and, taking a heavy iron bar which stood in the corner by the door—used when the wind arose to hurricane strength to keep the entrance firmly closed—she placed it in the iron sockets prepared for its reception, well knowing that the massive portal would resist, for hours, any attacks that might be made upon it. Taking her basket and the bundle of wicks, she closed and bolted the door at the foot of the steps and returned to the lantern, tired out with her exertions.

She pumped the oil, which was stored below, in barrels, into the lamp, fixed and trimmed the wicks, and then taking a draught of water from an immense tank in the lantern, filled from the roof by the rain of the preceding night, she threw herself on a small lounge that stood to one side and quickly fell asleep.

Hunger at length awakened her, as the sun was just disappearing below the western horizon, his last rays just visible as he sunk into the bosom of the night, and before she touched a mouthful of the food for which she was craving she lighted the lamps and watched the bright rays stream out over the ocean with a mourn-

ful pleasure, a tight, choking feeling at the throat, like a clutching hand, as she thought of the one who had last tended it: and then she seated herself to watch the flames until morning—for the lights must burn from "sun to sun"—eating a few mouthfuls, which, hungry as she was, had to be almost forced down, so repugnant and distasteful did it seem to her, weighed down and crushed by her great sorrow.

The lights burned steadily on, the rays from the lantern shot far out to sea, cheering the heart of many a mariner who caught its glare, and the girl, dropping into a slight doze, was dreaming one of those terrible dreams which are so vivid in their horror—a dream in which the door, opening into the lantern from the head of the winding steps was opened, and a procession of three ghostly corpses stalked in, blood-stained, and, with their glassy eyes staring straight before them, one of them carrying a gory knife. The other two, kneeling, began to decapitate one, and, having finished, cut the head from the shoulders of the other, after which he, encircling his own neck with the keen blade, lifted his head from its resting-place, and the three, carrying their open-eyed heads on their outstretched palms, walked about the lantern, a fountain of blood spurting from their jugular veins at every step, and were advancing toward her when, with a cry, she awoke, bathed in a cold perspiration which streamed from every pore, while she shivered and chattered with nervousness.

Stepping to one of the windows, she threw it open, and passed out onto the balcony for a breath of fresh air, when, her senses being sharpened by her late experiences, her ear caught the sound of low voices, and, looking far down, she saw a number of men stealthily approaching the door at the foot of the tower. Reaching it, they tried to open it, but the iron bar held firm, and if it yielded an inch, it would go no further; so, with a curse, one of the band, taking a short iron bar, a "jimmy," from one of his comrades, inserted it and endeavored to wrench the door from its hinges. The wreckers had seen the light and returned to extinguish it if they could force entrance and reach the lantern.

The door creaked and groaned, and as two more "jimmies" were inserted and the three men threw their weight against it, it began to give, although the massive iron bar inside held firm. The girl realized that if the hinges gave way the rest would be easy, for with nothing but a single bar to hold it, the door could be easily pushed in and the wreckers would soon gain access to the lantern, when instant death would be her portion, if she were not reserved for a fate to which death would be far preferable.

Hurrying into the lantern, and taking a can in which the oil had formerly been carried from below, and which contained some ten gallons of inflammable oil kept in case the pump would not work, she carried it to the railing to a point situated just above the door, and lighting it, poured the flaming liquid down upon the men below, while she cried:

"God forgive me; but if I fell into their hands, my fate would be worse than theirs!"

As the fiery stream ran down upon them, each one was almost instantly bathed in a flood of flame. Maddened by the burning fluid the villains fled, shrieking with anguish, some to plunge into the waters below, others to roll on the turf in writhing agony, while a dense cloud of smoke bearing the smell of burning clothes rose and enveloped the lantern, while through the obscure light the figure of the girl loomed gigantic, like a destroying angel.

CHAPTER X.

A WRECKER'S OATH.

AS Luke had released the hand of Winnemuka when he heard the noise of the pursuing footsteps, the Indian, believing that the boy was able to look out for himself, and caring more to escape with the child than for anything else, continued his rapid course through the obscurity, pursuing his way with unswerving accuracy, being guided by that instinct which seems invariably to direct the red-man wherever he may be, and avoiding the passage in which the boy had so nearly found his death, plunged into a larger corridor which turned abruptly to the left, and with renewed haste hurried along this smoother path until he saw far before him a glimmer of light, a mere spark, which seemed to glow in the pipe of the sentinel on duty at the place where the passage led into the open air, for the fresh current blowing into his face bore upon its wings a faint odor of tobacco-smoke, so, grasping his knife still more firmly, he nerved himself for the coming encounter and leaped forward toward the wrecker watch, who was unconscious of any approaching danger, so lightly did the Indian's feet fall on the rocky path he was treading.

But as Winnemuka bounded onward, his foot struck against a cord tightly stretched across the path, and he fell headlong onto what seemed to be a steel mattress, while, as his weight pressed the spring, there descended from above

a hollow cover which pinioned him down so that he lay immovable, while the hollow clang of a huge gong echoed through the passage, seeming to sound as if placed in the wrecker's cave, and the sentinel, warned by the noise, hurried to the trap—for such it was, this precaution having been taken to prevent surprise, as any one unfamiliar with the secret would invariably strike one of the half-dozen cords with his foot and set the mechanism in motion.

The Indian was powerless, and as others of the wrecker band came hurrying to the place where he lay, being warned by the sound of the gong that some interloper had been captured, he was dragged out by the feet, the end of the narrow, coffin-like box being lifted, and firmly bound with galling cords, and being unable to offer the slightest resistance.

The lid was raised and the little child, unhurt by the fall, lifted from the steel bed by one of the band, when the trap was again set and the prisoner was led back to the cave, the wreckers exulting in their capture, and soon the Indian was standing in the presence of the captain, as haughty as if he were the captor and the wrecker his prisoner.

The chief had partially recovered from the driving blow that Luke had launched full in his face, and, mad with pain and rage, gloated over his victim, while, an evil smile on his handsome face, his lieutenant, whose clothes were in disorder and dusty from his late struggle, while his throat bore the marks of the boy's choking fingers, leaned idly against the back of the captain's chair, his lips lightly holding the cigarette which rarely left them.

"Ah, ha, my copper-colored friend," sneered the wrecker, "again in the toils; and we will take good care that you do not escape us a second time—unless, indeed, you purchase your life by giving up the secret of that child," pointing to Lillian, who was struggling to escape from the arms of Ransom, who held her, while she beat his evil face with her puny hands.

"That there is some secret connected with her I well know, and a handsome reward will, I've no doubt, be given for her return.

"Where did you kidnap her?"

The dark face of the Indian worked with passion as he strained at the bonds which cut his flesh at elbows and wrists, while his eyes fairly blazed with the lurid light of rage; but in a moment he calmed himself and returned:

"The secret of Sunny Hair is not known to Winnemuka; did he know it, tortures could not wring it from him!"

"Ha, dog, you dare thus brave me? Now by Mephistopheles, my patron saint, think well before you speak—either a true answer to my question, or the child shall die as sure as yonder lamp swings there!" and he designated the center chandelier as he spoke. "I give you six hours to reflect. Fling him into yonder corner and guard him well—yes," and the child, seeing the Indian led away, struggled to follow him, "let the girl go with him; he will be more loth to part with her."

And the Indian was tossed into the corner onto a pile of rugs, and the little child nestling close to him, was soon apparently buried in profound slumber, while the wreckers, with the exception of the two who guarded Winnemuka, sought their couches, and soon the deep breathing from all parts of the cave bore witness to the fact that the band were also locked in the chains of "tired Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep," while the single lamp that was left burning only seemed to render darkness visible.

But rolling and tossing, as if in uneasy dreams, the Indian finally brought his mouth close to the child's head and whispered—so softly that the sentries standing a few paces distant heard nothing—a few words into her ear, while the little one, with an understanding far beyond her years, closed and reopened her eyes as a sign that she comprehended what was told her, and, rousing herself, drew one of the rugs over them both, as if she were cold.

And then her tiny fingers began to tug and pull at the knots which held the cords bound about his arms and wrists, and soon he felt the close coils relax as fold after fold was unwrapped, until finally he was free and the blood coursed once more through the veins, and his circulation being fully restored, he felt the numbness and stiffness passing away until his strength was fully regained, and cautiously raising his head, he looked about him.

Scarce a yard away, seated with their backs toward him, were the two guards, who, knowing how firmly he was bound, did not think it worth their while to watch him closely, while they talked in whispers that were so subdued as not to disturb any of the sleepers scattered about, their guns lying carelessly across their knees, and their heads close together.

Rising so cautiously that the wind, sweeping over the grassy plain, makes more noise than did he, Winnemuka, on hands and knees, crept toward the two men, as silently as the moccasins glide through the water, and then, crouching, he leaped high over their heads, and turning in the air, landed in front of them, grasped each one by the throat, dashed them back to the floor, before they realized what had

happened, and crushing them down, with a knee on the chest of each, choked them into insensibility before they could utter a cry or warn their comrades of the prisoner's freedom, and although they were strong, powerful men, in his hands they were as infants, and writhed and struggled in vain, until finally they quivered and lay motionless, when the Indian, his savage blood boiling into fevered heat, grasped a rifle, and leaping high into the air, dashed the central light into a thousand fragments, with a ringing yell, and, the child clinging close to his side, he whirled the heavy weapon about, striking to the ground a half-dozen of the wreckers, who rushed hither and thither in the darkness, confused by this unexpected turn of events.

They dared not fire, fearing to injure their comrades, while the swirling and circling weapon, swung about his head, kept a clear space all around the Indian, the butt of his weapon at times encountering a head, which it beat into a shapeless mass; but suddenly a weird glare came over the scene, lighting up the cavern with dazzling brightness; the boyish-looking lieutenant had secured a Bengal light, and touching a match to it, threw a bright glare over the scene and the actors, and Winnemuka, plainly visible, seemed doomed.

But the sudden transition from pitchy darkness to mid-day light dazzled the eyes of the wreckers for an instant, and taking advantage of this momentary pause, the Indian sprang upon the beardless youth, snatching a knife from the silken scarf which encircled the wrecker's waist, and while he held him firmly encircled with one hand, placed the point of the keen blade at his throat and cried to the band, as he backed toward the covered entrance, dragging the youth after him:

"Attempt to follow me and I sink the steel in his throat!"

This threat glued the band to their tracks, amid howls of rage and curses loud and deep that broke from the mouths of the baffled wreckers; but the captain, raising his hand, commanded silence, and from his seat addressed Winnemuka:

"Hold, Indian, I would parley with you; on the word of Captain Wrake, you are, for the present, safe, so release the youth!"

"He who parleys is playing a losing game," returned the Indian, who, reared among the whites, spoke perfect English. "But what would you?"

"I would exchange the youth for the child."

"Neither of which are in your power."

"But in a moment will be—at least the child will; for if I order my men to fire, they will obey, and if you kill the youth, the child will also die!"

For a moment the heart of Winnemuka failed him, as he felt the full force of the wrecker's remarks, but in an instant more he answered:

"Rather than that the child should fall into your hands, I will sink this knife into her breast, after the blade has sought the blood of this youth, your lieutenant and your evil spirit!" and, pressing, the needle-like point entered the delicate skin of the young wrecker's throat, a hair's thickness, and the youth winced and uttered a cry of pain.

As if the blade had entered his own breast, the captain of the band shrunk back in his seat, not daring to rise, for fear of some hasty action on the part of the Indian, while he groaned aloud as if the pain felt by the youth had struck deep into his own nerves, and stretching out his hands in appeal to Winnemuka, he cried:

"Stay your hand for the sake of the mother who bore you—you would not slay a woman!"

"A woman!" echoed the Indian, almost releasing his captive.

"Ay, a woman, and my wife!" cried the captain, who in his life of crime had preserved one pure spot in his heart, which was kept sacred for the being he idolized.

But the Indian was quick to perceive the advantage he had gained, and quickly gave his answer:

"The life of your wife, Captain Wrake, is no more precious to you than the existence and well-being of this child is to me—and I will hold her as a hostage for our joint safety. You pledged your word that I was, for the present, safe, and I believe you, for I have heard that your word was never broken. I, in return, pledge the word of Winnemuka, that once safe beyond this den, I will release this—this lady, and she can return unharmed."

"And I will accept it, for the Shinnecocks have ever kept their oaths," and turning to his men, he said in a stern and commanding tone:

"He is free!"

In an instant the guns clattered to the ground, pistols were uncapped and returned to the belt, while the captain, reaching out his hand, pulled a cord thrice, and then, after an interval of a few seconds, twice more, and the gong overhead rung out its hollow clang in response, signaling to the sentry on watch that those about to go out were to be allowed to pass.

But as if the strokes had been a signal, the curtain hanging over the entrance was dashed aside, and three figures, scorched and seared as if they had fallen into a sea of flame, dashed into the cavern, and presented such an awful

appearance that all started back in horror, for their hair was burnt from their heads, their beard from their faces, the latter being seamed and scarred, and disfigured beyond recognition, while their clothes gave out a sickly, burning smell that proved that some sparks yet lingered among their apparel.

And maddened as they were with pain and fury, and seeing a stranger in their midst, the three dashed upon Winnemuka, and despite the orders of the captain, hewed and hacked and stabbed him in twenty places before he could defend himself, while in a moment a revolver flashed thrice, and the three wretches, weltering in their gore, rolled on the floor, writhing in the throes of approaching death.

Captain Wrake had kept his pledge as best he could.

CHAPTER XI.

RESCUED.

THE victory of the girl was complete, and as the howling wreckers scattered in every direction, she realized that she was, for the time, safe from any further interruption, and re-entering the lantern, again threw herself on the lounge, after trimming the lamps and seeing that they were burning steadily, and again dropped off into a deep sleep which lasted until the sun was high in the heavens, and, being awakened by the rays streaming through the corrugated glass, quickly extinguished the lamps, and drew the curtains close over all the windows.

The day grew and waned and nothing of incident occurred, yet the hours dragged with leaden feet, while every moment was filled with the thoughts of the bodies lying below, and she was nearly wild with the emotions that overwhelmed her; for the ground was iron-bound by the frost which had frozen it into rock-like solidity, through which her frail strength would be unable to pierce a grave.

And the night came, bearing on its wings a raging tempest, and the snow and the sleet beat against the glass in the sashes as if they would shiver it to atoms, yet the lights burned steadily on, carefully watched by the girl, who slept not for an instant, so full was the long vigil of horrors; the awful presence of the dead overshadowing her; while the fury of the gale, the moaning and beating of the sea, the rattling and crashing of the storm against the sashes, intensified and heightened the loneliness of her position.

But there is an end to everything in this life, and finally the day broke, although the sky was still obscured by the driving clouds, and, although the gale subsided almost as suddenly as it had sprung up, yet the sea had been lashed into such mad fury that it still tumbled and tossed like an uneasy and restless spirit, the rollers rushing in and dashing against the rocky barriers opposed to them as if they would hurl the cliffs from their foundations.

And after a short and unsatisfactory sleep, the girl, realizing that something *must* be done toward interring her father and the two keepers, stepped out onto the balcony to cool her fevered brow, for the atmosphere inside the lantern was hot and stifling from the heat and smoke of the lamps.

And as she looked out over the leaping, angry waters, her eye caught sight of an object which was rolling, and tumbling, and to-ing in the broken sea, and she gazed at it long and earnestly, endeavoring to distinguish what it might be; but without avail, as it was, half the time, ingulfed in the stormy waves, and only momentary glimpses of it could be caught.

Determined to solve this mystery, and with an intuitive feeling that relief would arrive if she pursued her intention to the end, she hurried down the winding stairs to the vestibule—which seemed more than ever like a vault, with the three bodies laid out there—unbarred the door, which hung loosely, showing how nearly successful the effort of the wreckers to effect an entrance had been, ran quickly across the point of land, and scrambling down to the little cove where lay her boat—a life-craft in miniature—cast loose the painter, and taking the oars and settling herself firmly in her seat, shoved off.

There was bold water just outside the little land-locked harbor, and the rollers swept in unbroken, so that she was soon, without experiencing any great difficulty, some distance from shore, and pulling steadily for the object that she had seen, and which, steadily carried on by the tide and by a current which swept around the bluff on which was situated the light-house, was now almost opposite the point where she had embarked, and rapidly approached her.

She was quickly drenched with the water, which, dashing against the bow of the boat, leaped high in the air, and at times bathed her from head to foot, but the little craft rose like a cork, emptying herself of the water which flooded her, and causing the brave girl no fear of being swamped, and was soon alongside of the object, which she now recognized as a life-car, it being marked with the number of the Bridgehampton life-saving station, to which it belonged.

Lifting one of her oars from the row-locks,

she struck the iron case several times, signaling any one who might be inside, while for a few seconds her heart seemed to cease beating as she leaned eagerly forward—listening intently for any response; and it quickly came in the shape of three thundering raps, showing that there was somebody inside, and that some one a person who was decidedly alive, so she attached the line, which was still fastened to the car, to the stern of the boat, and turning the prow toward the shore, pulled vigorously, and with long, steady strokes, with the precision of a machine, in the direction of the cove toward which the tide and current had carried them, and soon entering upon its smoother waters, leaped onto the sand and drew the life-car into shallow water.

The bottom of the car was heavily weighted with bars of lead, which had prevented its rolling completely over, serving as they did as ballast, while the iron case, being completely air-tight, had floated over the waters like a life-boat.

As the iron grated on the sand, the trap-door, which opened outward, was lifted, and the pale face of a handsome youth peered inquiringly out, and Luke, seeing no one near but the young girl, who was leaning forward awaiting what the car might bring forth, stepped out and extended his hand with a word of grateful thanks.

He was dripping wet, as he had opened the trap more than once to obtain a supply of fresh air, without which he would surely have suffocated, for the waves had dashed in, drenching him through and through, and he had only been preserved from freezing by the brandy contained in flasks, which was secured to the sides of the life-car.

Drawing the iron casket high up on the beach, he followed the girl up the precipitous path which led to the top, and at her suggestion entered the dwelling to procure dry garments, while the girl proceeded to the light-house, and walking around it saw that horror upon horror was accumulating about her, and breathed a prayer of thanksgiving that she was no longer alone, and that through her efforts Luke was now near to protect her, for, although she had never seen him before, there was something in the youth's frank, ingenuous, noble countenance that inspired faith and led her to repose implicit confidence in him.

In front of the door which led into the light-house, and lying at the bottom of the dozen steps, wrapped in a magnificent Cashmere shawl, lay an Indian, so enwrapped in bandages and so plastered over, as she saw him when she had thrown the covering back from his shoulders, that he resembled nothing so much as an Egyptian mummy; while his bronzed face wore a tense, drawn expression, and was waxen in its color, heightening the likeness into startling reality; and kneeling by his side, and calling on him with plaintive cries, was a dainty little fairy creature, with sky-blue eyes and golden locks, who seemed the incarnation of *spirituelle* loveliness.

Pinned to the shawl was a piece of paper which the girl quickly unfastened, and opening it read:

"Captain Wrake,"—and at the name she shuddered—"endeavored in vain to keep his oath, and to allow this man to go free.

"It is through no fault of his that he was injured; and now he, fearing that the damp air of the cave may prove fatal to him, sends the Indian to the light-house at Bell Point for better care and nursing than he is able to give."

A hurried footstep behind her caused her to turn rapidly with a thrill of terror, but it was only Luke, who, dressed in a suit of her father's clothes, which were a world too large for him, was hastening to the light-house to render her any assistance in his power, for a few words spoken after they had left the beach had informed him of the awful tragedy which had taken place before.

Catching sight of the Indian, in an instant he was beside him, and bending low, listened to the labored breathing of the wounded man, as the air hissed between his clinched teeth, and cried:

"It is Winnemuka! My God, how has this happened?"

"You know him, then?" asked the girl, relieved all at once by this recognition, for she feared that it might be some new trap, set by the wreckers.

"He saved me from the clutches of Wrake and his band, not many hours ago, at the imminent risk of his life—a nobler heart beats in no human breast than this which flutters so weakly.

"He's Winnemuka—the Last of the Shinne-cocks!"

"I know of him; my father often mentioned to me the name of the brave fellow; and what a firm friend of the whites he was; but who is the little girl?"

"A child saved from the wreck of the Jessie by Winnemuka, but whose history is unknown to him, the captain having been crushed to death before he had finished telling the Indian who she was.

"But what is to be done with the poor fellow?"

"You must carry him up to the lantern, which I dare not leave unattended; and there I can care for and nurse him, while the child can remain with him."

And Luke, tenderly lifting the almost inanimate body in his strong young arms, carried him up the winding stairs and placed him carefully on the lounge, where he washed and re-bandaged his numerous wounds, after dressing them with some healing ointment kept on hand in the light-house.

He then called to the girl, who came up, followed by Lillian, and hastily ate some lunch that was set before him, and then prepared to dispose of the bodies which demanded his attention.

Procuring a pick-axe and spade, he descended to the little cove, where he dug a deep trench in the yielding sand, far above high-water mark, and then, carrying the bodies one by one, and wrapping them in heavy canvas, he placed the three side by side in the iron life-car, and with ropes, after closing the trap and shooting the outside bolt, lowered it into the grave he had dug, while the tears of the girl fell thick and fast.

The life-car had become a coffin!

CHAPTER XII.

SOUGHT AND FOUND.

As the foremast fell into the sea with a terrible crash, a cry went up from the crowd that had gathered on the beach to render what assistance they might, for they realized that the youth who had so bravely imperiled his life to rescue the drowning passengers, must have been hurled down to instant death, believing that he could not escape from the tangled mass of rigging which would prevent his swimming, and knowing that, even if he did, the sea pousse, as the Indians call it, or off-shore current, would carry him far out to sea; for the wind, blowing from the southwest, causes these treacherous currents, which have caused the death of many a strong swimmer along the Long Island Coast.

In the life-saving station were collected those saved from the wreck, and among them Irene Faulconer, who, not being very strong, had succumbed to the fatigue and excitement, and now lay delirious, her congested brain presenting the late scenes in all their intensity, while her piercing cries for help chilled the blood of all those gathered there, and who represented the steamer's passengers and crew.

Raving, she lay there until twenty-four hours had come and gone, when suddenly her cries ceased, and sinking under the effect of opiates, she fell into a deep and peaceful sleep, from which she awakened weak but completely restored to her senses, and able to listen to the sad story that her aunt had to tell her regarding Luke's untimely fate.

They were alone in the room, for those saved from the wreck had scattered in different directions, and no one was at the station save the crew, who had not ventured near the chamber where she was lying, except to tap occasionally on the door and respectfully ask if they could do anything for the invalid, Mrs. Harcourt—Irene's aunt—having distributed golden gifts bountifully among the crew.

In twenty-four hours more the girl was almost completely restored and able to leave the room, so, walking out among the brave fellows, who rose as she entered their living-room, and who congratulated her in rough but heartfelt words, she shook hands with each and warmly thanked them for what they had done for her, although they disclaimed any meed of praise, telling her she owed her life to the brave lad who had, with a self-abnegation which was more than heroic, risked his life to bear them succor.

And the girl determined that she would leave no effort unspared to find the lad—if well and safe to load him with gifts—if dead, to give him decent burial and erect over his grave a monument bearing the inscription—than which none awarding higher praise could be found: "He gave his life for others!"

She did not even know his name, but then she realized that she would know him among thousands, and calling to the captain of the life-savers, she asked him to take a short walk with her on the beach, to which request he instantly assented, and followed her out into the open air, which was sharp yet refreshing to Irene, and they strolled along the yielding sand until opposite the wreck, which having slid off into deeper water, as the tide had changed, was only located by the mainmast, which stood some feet out of the water and pointed straight up to Heaven, while, gazing on the smooth waters, she could scarcely realize that they could be lashed into the tremendous fury that she had witnessed such a short time before, while the awful experiences of that night were recalled faintly, like a dream.

Seating herself on a little bank of sand, while the life-saver stood before her, respectfully waiting for what she might have to say, Irene, turning to him, requested his advice.

"You know, Captain Ludlow, under what extreme obligations both my aunt and I are to the brave boy that rescued us, and I feel that I

cannot rest until I have partially repaid the debt.

"I will search the shores of this island until I find, or hear of, him."

"The currents are strong, Miss Irene"—he knew her by no other name—"and bodies are often carried as far as Montauk Point before they are washed ashore, as I know from personal observation."

"To Montauk?"

"Yes, miss."

"And how far is that?"

"Twenty-four miles at least."

"Then I will search the coast for twenty-five miles."

"But sometimes bodies are carried past the Point as far as the Connecticut shore, so swiftly set the tides and the currents."

"Then I will search the Connecticut shore," was the calm reply.

"Then, if you are determined, I would suggest—"

"Ah, it was to hear your suggestions that I requested you to come with me."

"You can hire some of the fishermen to row you along the coast, close to the shore, as far as Montauk, and thus inspect every inch of the beach as you pass along."

"And can you make the arrangements for me?"

"I can."

"And you will?"

"With pleasure."

"Then let us return, and the sooner you can complete your preparations the better."

"In an hour I can have the crew here."

"Thank you very much," and rising, she returned to the station, while the captain went in search of the crew.

Within the promised hour, the boat, manned by four sturdy fishermen, was lazily rocking on the placid waters, opposite the station, and Irene, accompanied by her aunt, after again thanking the captain and his crew, walked to the water's edge, and the boat being backed ashore, stepped into the stern-sheets, seated herself by her aunt, who was already comfortably settled, and amidst many good wishes from the crew, gave the signal to let fall oars and give way, and bending forward, she spoke to the stroke-oarsman:

"I presume that Captain Ludlow gave you your instructions?"

"Yes, miss: to hug the shore as close as possible to Montauk, and examine every inch o' the way."

"Exactly; and do you think we can find the body?"

"Well, miss, it's hard tellin'; my three boys," jerking his head back over his shoulder, "I'll not let anythin' pass their eyes; but who knows if the lad be n't tangled in the wreckage, and down at the bottom o' the sea!"

"Oh, no, do not discourage me; you know what he did for us, and"—a storm of sobs interrupted her, while the old sailor, resting his bronzed hand tenderly on hers, while he pulled steadily on, tried to cheer her.

"There, there, my pretty, I'm an old croaker, an' desave to take his place if he be drowned; yet a lad like that, who done wonders to save ye, he'll not be made food for the fishes 'thout a struggle, and more'n likely we'll find him as smart as a clipper ship in a six-knot breeze."

The homely words of the kindly old salt cheered and comforted her, and soon she was smiling through her tears, but only answered:

"God grant that your last prophecy may come true!"

To which the four oarsmen responded with one voice and reverently baring their heads:

"Amen!"

And so they sped along until they came almost opposite East Hampton, where is situated a life-saving station, and there they landed; but no clew was gained from the crew.

"A lot o' wreckage has drifted past, miss," said one of the men, after he had been told the object of their search, "an' not knowin' but some poor fellow might be a-clingin' to it, we've kep' a sharp lookout, but we hain't seen nothin'."

"Sorry, miss, but if anythin' turns up we'll report to the Bridgehampton coast-guard, for our men an' theirs meet half-way atween the stations, an' exchange checks."

"Good-by, miss, an' good luck!"

And the boat once more proceeded on its mournful search, at times stopping as some object lying at the water's edge attracted their attention, but which, on closer inspection, proved to be an old ship's timber, a sunken log or stump, or in some instances, portions of the "Circassian," proving that they were on the right track.

And so they rowed steadily along, until night came, and they landed and sought shelter at a farm-house for the night, it being hospitably accorded them, the good woman of the farm sympathizing with the girl and weaving a little romance in which Irene and the lost lad figured as sweethearts.

An early start the next day, a careful search, not an inch of the coast remaining uninspected, but without result, until they reached the rocky promontory of Montauk, and, rounding the

Point, landed on the northern side, and climbing the steep cliffs, repeated their inquiries at the light-house, but the same disheartening answer was returned, and heart-sick they retraced their steps to the boat, and were about to enter, when one of the keepers, whom they had not seen, came shouting after him, and as he came up with the party, said:

"When I was on watch, last night, miss, I saw somethin' carried around the P'int by the current, which set off to the north'ard, and it looked like a boat or lot o' wreck."

"The current must 'a' carried it toward Bell-Point, an' if you sail for there—"

"Yes, yes," interrupted the girl; "thank, oh, thank you!" and she tendered him a glittering piece of gold, which he, however, declined.

"We may be a rough lot, miss, but we don't ask no favors when we can help any one. Thank ye kindly, miss, but I'd rather not take it."

"Then take my hand!" impulsively cried the girl, blushing at the thought of having hurt his feelings, and she took the honest keeper warmly by the hand, and then sprung lightly into the boat, with renewed hope.

A gentle breeze was blowing from the south, and a leg of mutton sail was hoisted, and they bowled merrily along, until darkness came on and the light at Bell Point shone out brighter and brighter, until, about midnight, they were within a half-mile of the shore.

But suddenly a bright blaze leaped high in the air, and by its flaming light they could see that the house of the keeper was burning furiously, the tongues of fire leaping high through the roof amid a cloud of smoke and sparks, and standing by one of the chimneys was a human figure, which, as they approached closer and closer, loomed gigantic, until his features could be distinguished, and Irene, leaping to her feet, cried:

"It is our preserver!" when, with a mighty crash, the roof fell in, and Luke was dashed into the seething mass below.

CHAPTER XIII.

PISTOLS AT TEN PACES.

WALTER LANGLEY entered his private office hurriedly, and removing his overcoat, hung it with his hat on its accustomed nail, and then entering the room where his partner George Edgerton was seated, greeted him warmly:

"Well, my boy," cried the latter, "for a love-lorn swain—I might say a 'grass Benedict'—you look pretty blooming, I must confess."

"How fares the fair Irene?"

"Well, I hope, George; she sailed yesterday morning, early, and as I had to run over to Philadelphia, I made my *adieu* on the evening before."

"I only just returned; what is the news?" and the two young brokers were soon deeply engaged in the mysteries of stocks and bonds; puts and calls, seller's and buyer's option, short and long, and all the other puzzling intricacies that bewilder any one who is a stranger in Wall street.

While they were thus busily engaged, it being well on in the afternoon, the door of the office was thrown open, and a stylishly-dressed young man, apparently about twenty-four years old, handsome as a Grecian god, but bearing on his fine features the unmistakable stamp of a wild and profligate life, entered, and hastily approaching Langley with extended hand, addressed him:

"Walter, my boy, I sympathize with you!" while in the street could be heard the newsboys crying:

"*Evening Telegram*; all about the terrible wreck!"

Leaping to his feet, and not noticing the outstretched hand which was still held extended by Maurice Cowdrey, Langley gazed with terrible earnestness at the columns of the paper which the office-boy at that moment brought in; and this was what he read:

"WRECK OF THE CIRCASSIAN."

"THE IRON STEAMER GOES ASHORE IN A SNOW-SQUALL AND BREAKS TO PIECES."

"THE BRAVERY OF AN UNKNOWN YOUTH SAVES THE PASSENGERS AND CREW FROM A TERRIBLE FATE."

[Special to the Telegram.]

BRIDGEHAMPTON, March —, 187—.

"The iron steamer *Circassian* of the Vanderbilt line, came ashore in a snow-squall, yesterday afternoon, grounding hard and fast on the bar. All the efforts of the life-crew to throw a line over the doomed vessel were futile, while the tremendous breakers prevented the launching of the life-boat. A brave lad, unknown to any present, succeeded, after a terrible struggle, in reaching the steamer with a line, late at night, and the life car brought all safe to land except the youth, who remained on board until the last, and was preparing to leave the wreck, when the foremast fell, dragging him into the sea with it, and he was undoubtedly lost. All of the passengers and crew—save one—were rescued. The steamer has slid off into deeper water and is a total wreck."

"[Miss Faulconer, the daughter of the gentleman so mysteriously murdered, yesterday morning, and his sister, Mrs. Harcourt, were passengers on the wrecked steamer; but are doubtless among the saved—EDITOR.]"

"Mr. Faulconer murdered! Irene wrecked! Good heavens, George! what horror is this?"

"My yacht is at Babylon, and I will go there at once and sail down to Bridgehampton and see if I can be of any assistance to Irene."

The cold, cutting voice of Maurice Cowdrey broke the silence before Edgerton could answer:

"You will kindly speak of the young lady whom you just mentioned as *Miss Faulconer*, Mr. Langley, in the future!"

"And by what right, sir, do you presume to dictate to me regarding anything I may say relating to the young lady whose name you have just mentioned?"

"By the right that I assume as her future husband!"

"Her future husband!"

"Precisely," returned the sneering voice.

"Irene Faulconer bears on her hand the ring which is the pledge of our engagement," retorted Langley, while he grew cooler and cooler as his passion rose.

"Engaged to you! In faith a good joke, and—"

"Hold, sir, no more, I command you!"

"My dear fellow, you are crazy; if you have been jilted, console yourself with the thought that the sea yet contains as excellent fish as ever were caught; ta-ta, I must leave you, as I also wish to be with Irene in her present distress."

"This affair will hasten our wedding, and I will send you both an invitation—"

"Now, by the gods above us, you lie in your throat, and I will choke the dastardly words back into your black heart!"

And the young broker sprung upon Cowdrey and dashed him to the floor; but in an instant more Edgerton, a perfect young Hercules, had separated them and counseled calmness.

"You will hear from me soon, Mr. Langley," remarked Cowdrey, coolly, as he brushed the dust from his coat and arranged his disordered attire.

"To whom can I send my friend?"

"George, you will serve me?" asked Langley, turning to his partner and bosom friend.

"But cannot this matter be arranged?"

"No compromise is possible," returned both the young men, while Edgerton, seeing that the affair was inevitable, turned to Langley:

"Then, Walter, command me; Mr. Cowdrey, I will remain here until six; good-afternoon."

And the three young men saluted each other courteously, when Cowdrey opened the door and disappeared.

"Well, well, Walter," said his partner, as the door closed, "this is an unfortunate affair; but it is done, and there is no help for it; what arrangements shall I make?"

"To-morrow morning, sunrise, Sandy Hook, pistols, ten paces."

"But Cowdrey has the reputation of being a dead shot, and—"

"Excuse me, George, if I leave you now," returned the other, indifferently, and apparently not heeding his friend's remark; "I have letters to write and my lawyer to see, so will go; you will find me at Delmonico's about seven; I will remain there until you arrive; but come as soon as you can, I want to go to the theater this evening to see the new opera—good-afternoon."

And he, putting on his hat and coat, left his partner marveling at his coolness.

Within an hour a discreet tap was heard at the door, and, in response to his reply, a gentleman walked in and greeted Edgerton warmly:

"Ah, sir, an unpleasant little affair that our young friends have gotten us into," he remarked, as in response to the young broker's invitation he seated himself.

This new-comer was a man of anywhere between forty and sixty years, so well was his age disguised, and was dressed with exquisite neatness, while his well-dressed mustache and goatee were without a single gray hair, being of a golden hue, but whether this was due to nature or art it was impossible to tell.

His eyes were his bad feature, never looking any one square in the face, but restlessly shifting about with quick and ferret-like glances, while in his button-hole he wore a red ribbon, the presence of which he always explained airily, waving the matter aside with his white hand as of no particular importance, while, with his long, supple fingers, that denoted an adept with cards, he rolled a cigarette.

"The ribbon of the Legion of Honor, my dear boy; given me in France for gallant conduct during the *commune*."

He was thoroughly familiar with the "Code," had "been out" numerous times, and was considered authority on all matters connected with dueling; while, if his reputation was a little shady, he had always managed to escape detection in any dishonorable practices, and was received by the best society, besides being a member of the best up-town clubs.

"I am here, Mr. Edgerton, at the request of

Mr. Cowdrey; if Mr. Langley will offer a public apology—"

"None will be offered, public or private."

"This is your ultimatum?"

"Irrevocably."

"Then I am authorized to challenge Mr. Walter Langley to meet Mr. Maurice Cowdrey at the time, place, and with what weapons the former may designate."

"To-morrow at sunrise, colonel, we will be at Sandy Hook, with pistols—ten paces, by the way, is the distance decided upon—and will there await your arrival."

"If we do not precede you," laughingly returned Colonel Breytoun, as, bowing low in acknowledgment of the courtesy, he passed out of the door, which Edgerton held wide open for him.

Having nothing further to detain him at the office, George Edgerton, hastening to Broadway, jumped into a passing cab and was rapidly driven to his apartments, where he unlocked a cabinet and took out a case of dueling-pistols, which were of extreme neatness and finish and as clean as if just from the gunsmith's, and these he examined with care, inspecting also the powder-flask to see that it was full and the compartments where were kept the bullets, caps and wadding, to see that there was ample supply of these materials, and then, taking the case under his arm, he proceeded to the restaurant, where he found Walter seated at a table spread for three, in company with a physician whom he knew well.

"Ah, George, we were expecting you," sit down. Doctor Zachary, you know."

And calling the waiter, they were soon engaged in discussing their dinner, talking of a thousand things, but never mentioning the duel, and, their repast finished, they proceeded to the theater, which they enjoyed thoroughly, Edgerton being the most worried of the trio.

As they left the place of amusement Walter, turning to his partner, informed him of what he had done.

"I have engaged a tug, George, and she lies at the Battery, awaiting us; the doctor goes along."

"Yes," laughed the physician; "you know, Mr. Edgerton, we are necessary evils; but I hope our rash young friend here will not need my services."

"And if I do, doctor," returned Langley, "I know of no one in whose skill I have as much faith."

The old practitioner did not answer, but let his hand fall caressingly on the young man's shoulder, an action that spoke much louder than words.

Not long after they reached the Battery, and, having embarked, were soon steaming down the Bay, and arrived at their destination long before daybreak, and there lay to, Walter Langley sleeping quietly until aroused by Edgerton, who told him that it was nearly sunrise and that a yacht was rapidly approaching, when he went on deck, and the three were soon landed, while the tug steamed off to return in half an hour.

The yacht was thrown up into the wind, and Cowdrey and the colonel soon joined them, when the latter and Edgerton measured off the ground and loaded the weapons, which were then handed to the principals, who had been stationed in their places, when Breytoun, taking a silver coin from his pocket, flipped it high in the air to decide which should give the word.

"Heads!" cried Edgerton.

But, at the same moment, Walter, raising his pistol, fired at the spinning coin, and the glittering piece of silver, struck fair, flew far away over the sand.

"When you match coins, George," coolly remarked Langley, "you almost invariably choose 'heads,' and this fact is well known."

"Pick up that coin and see if there are not two sides alike—both being tails."

The coin was picked up, and it was as Walter had said.

"I know the colonel, and merely want fair play, for I think Mr. Cowdrey might fire before the word if it was given by his second; toss again."

Another coin was produced, and George won the toss, and, Walter's pistol being again reloaded, neither Breytoun nor Cowdrey saying a word, although the latter was evidently unnerved by the marksmanship displayed by Langley.

"Gentlemen," cried George, "I shall ask if you are ready, then, if I hear no response, shall say 'Fire, one, two, three!' He who fires before the first word, or after the last, attempts to commit murder!"

"Are you ready? Fire! one—two—"

The simultaneous reports broke out on the still air as one shot, while the smoke drifted off, and the three witnesses of the tragedy stood for a moment without stirring a finger.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BAPTISM OF FIRE.

THE mournful task performed, and the last shovelful of sand being heaped upon the grave,

a few stones being piled up around it to mark the spot, the three—for Lillian had refused to remain away from Carrie, for whom she had instantly acquired a great liking—returned to the light-house and were relieved to find Winnemuka still sleeping soundly, as they had left him.

Taking into consideration the heavy and smoke-laden condition of the atmosphere inside the lantern when the lamps were lighted, Luke proposed that they should remove the wounded man to the dwelling, where he would be more comfortable; but to this the girl would not accede.

"The wreckers may return at any instant," she argued, "and if he were there he could not be protected; here he is at least comparatively safe."

"But they released him once, and—"

"There is some mystery connected with this that we cannot fathom; we must wait patiently until Winnemuka can enlighten us."

"Then I will go to the house and rest, for I am completely fagged out; and, in the future, until you can get some word to headquarters, I will attend to the light."

"Indeed, no; I look upon it as a sacred charge left to me by my father, who often told me, should anything befall, to guard the light carefully."

"You insist?"

"I do."

"Then so be it; but I will share your vigil with you."

"Thank you," replied the girl, simply, and then set about trimming the lamps and supplying the reservoirs with oil, while Luke, descending and proceeding to the house, was soon fast asleep.

Soon after dark he awoke, and hastily dressing himself returned to the lantern, from which the rays streamed clear and bright, and there found Lillian sound asleep on an improvised bed, spread on the floor, while the daughter of the light-house-keeper was seated beside the lounge on which Winnemuka was lying and talking to him, and as the boy entered, the Indian, with a faint smile, extended his hand as best he could, so weak was he from loss of blood and from the exertion of talking.

Warning him to remain silent and not to further fatigue himself, the girl related to Luke what the Indian had told her, regarding his capture and escape, and then, as Winnemuka fell off to sleep again, asked the boy to watch the lamps for half an hour, until she could go to the house and obtain a change of apparel.

The night passed, another day came, and as a coasting-schooner hove to off the point, and a small boat shot out from her side in the direction of the cove, Luke went to meet it, and found that it was a friend of the keeper, who always stopped to bring letters and papers, and to him the boy related the thrilling experiences of the girl and requested him to report the same at New York, that it might be forwarded to Washington.

The old sailor became very much excited when he heard of his friend's death, and ripped out a volley of oaths, directed at the wreckers, that made the very air blue, but soon quieted down, and, at Luke's suggestion, went to the light-house to see Carrie Homer.

He cheered and comforted the girl with rough but kindly words, and then, seeing the Indian, after climbing the lantern, turned to Luke.

"That poor fellow'll die if he stays here; let me take him on my schooner and land him at New London, where he'll get good doctors; as for the nussin', I don't b'lieve that kin be improved on."

"What d'ye say?"

"A good suggestion, captain; and if you will help me, we'll carry him down together."

"Take hold, lad, take hold; I'll see that he gets a good berth!"

Winnemuka was carefully carried down the stairway, and, being placed in the rowboat, was rowed alongside, and the falls being hooked on, was lifted on board and laid in a swing-cot, that was hastily rigged for him, when Luke, grasping his hand, wished him a speedy recovery.

"Winnemuka will soon get well; take care of the little one!"

"With my life!"

"Soon back, and then Luke will learn something."

"Good-by."

"Good-by, Winnemuka; and good luck."

Returning to the deck, the boy thanked the bluff old mariner, and was then quickly rowed ashore, while the schooner, as if courtesying farewell, leaned far to leeward, and scudded off before the wind, her white sails shining in the bright sun, while the water rippled away from her bows in foaming masses that shimmered like molten silver.

Rejoining the girl, who stood on the cliff, handkerchief in hand, waving a farewell to the departing vessel, while Lillian clung confidently to her dress, her deep blue eyes welling with tears as she realized that Winnemuka had left her, he advised her to take what rest she could, which advice she took, returning to the

house with the little girl, while Luke, going to the lantern, snatched a few hours' sleep on the lounge which had been Winnemuka's bed.

He was awakened by the return of the girl, and, after proceeding to the vestibule, he set to work to strengthen the defenses of the door, in which he succeeded so well as to render it almost impregnable, and then, bidding the girl good-night, he walked out on the cliff, but was called back by Carrie, who said:

"Luke"—for she knew no other name—"I feel uneasy to-night, and do not believe that the wreckers are going to allow this matter to drop."

"But you are safe, now that the door is held by the three bars instead of one."

"Yes, I know; Lillian and I will be out of danger; but you?"

"Oh, do not worry about me."

"But—"

"Do not worry, for I will be all right."

"You are going to the house to remain, to-night?"

"I am."

"But why not remain here, where you will be safer, with Lillian and me?"

"The house would be unprotected, and they might enter and plunder it."

"There is nothing there worth their trouble."

"But I prefer to remain there; they are vindictive enough to destroy the furniture from mere revenge."

"Well, let them."

"No, indeed! But are there any arms there?"

"Arms?"

"Yes."

"None at all; father had a rifle, but broke some of the mechanism last week, and had no opportunity of getting it repaired; but I have my revolver."

"Well, then, I must do without. I will not take your weapon."

"You had better reconsider your determination."

"I have reconsidered, so good-night again."

"Well, if you will go, good-night."

"Fasten the door firmly."

"I will; I trust you will not be disturbed."

"Do not fear."

Luke then proceeded to the dwelling, and, entering, examined the doors and windows, and was relieved to find the fastenings intact, the latter being closed with heavy shutters, and firmly securing them, he lighted a lamp, and picking up a book, was soon deeply interested in its pages, while the hours sped on until the clock on the mantel chimed one.

Rousing himself, he walked to one of the windows which looked out toward the light-house, and, peering through the cracks, saw that the lamps were burning steadily, and that everything was apparently quiet; but as he was turning away, he heard the low murmur of voices just outside, and for an instant his heart seemed to stop beating; but he was a brave lad, and soon regained his nerve and usual coolness, so raising the sash very softly, he listened.

"The boy is inside, for I seen him go in, an' heard him fasten the door, an' I know he hain't gone out since," whispered a voice.

"Yes, an' the light's a-burnin' inside now."

"Then surround the house, and if he tries to escape, shoot him down!"

"And shall we light up now, captain?"

"Yes."

In an instant the shivering of glass was heard as the window leading into the cellar, the existence of which was unknown to Luke, was shattered, and soon a crackling was heard below, while in a few minutes more the floor on which he was standing became so hot that he could not bear his feet on the carpet, which began to scorch, and dense clouds of smoke filled the room with stifling vapor; so that, not daring to brave the bullets which would certainly seek his life, he was forced to the second story, whence the leaping flames quickly drove him to the roof.

And there he stood while the wreckers below jeered and hooted at him, while the heat became unsupportable, and the smoke and the sparks whirled in eddying clouds around him, until finally the ordeal became more than he could bear, and he was about to leap into the incandescent mass below to end his agony, when the roof fell in, and, instinctively, he leaped onto the chimney by which he was standing, lowered himself down into it and let go, sliding rapidly down, scratching his hands and face, until, finally, he struck, feet first, in an ice-cold body of water, which covered him completely, entirely submerging him.

CHAPTER XV.

A WATERY GRAVE.

MAURICE COWDREY had fallen, shot through the body, and as the old physician bent over him he shook his head despairingly, as though the wound were a mortal one and no hope of his recovery was to be expected, while Walter Langley, pale and stern, stood in his tracks, awaiting what tidings his second might bring him.

While the physician was examining the wounded man Colonel Breytoune, having spoken a word or two to Doctor Zachary, walked to where Langley was standing.

"It is now my turn, sir," he said, drawing himself up pompously and addressing Walter.

"Your turn, sir?" asked the young broker.

"Mine, sir!"

"You will pardon me, colonel; but, really I—"

"A gross insult has been offered me, sir, and by you, and I demand instant satisfaction; instant satisfaction, sir."

"But, sir—"

"But me no buts, sir!" interrupted Breytoune, savagely. "If words are not strong enough, then—"

And leaning forward he slapped Langley on the cheek with his open hand before the young man could ward off the blow.

His blood boiled, for he was naturally quick-tempered, while he cried:

"Let it be, sir, as you wish—here are the weapons, and we will dispense with seconds. Mr. Edgerton will give us the word, if it so pleases you."

The doctor and Langley's partner, hearing the angry words, had turned and witnessed the blow, and now came running toward the disputants.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen, this has gone far enough—sufficient blood has already been shed. Let me prevail upon you to let this matter drop," cried the old physician, trembling as he spoke.

"No interference will be tolerated, Doctor Zachary," retorted the colonel. "Only this gentleman's blood or mine can wipe out this stain on my honor."

"Mr. Edgerton, will you load the weapons, measure the distance—ten paces?" turning to Langley, who merely bowed—"and give us the word?"

George turned to his friend with an imploring look on his face, but received no encouragement from him.

"This affair must be decided at once; please do as Colonel Breytoune requests, George."

With a sigh, the young broker turned to the case, took the pistols and loaded them in full sight of the two adversaries, and stationed them, while the old doctor stood muttering something that sounded like:

"Hot-headed young fool; a little blood-letting will not hurt him a bit."

Then Edgerton spoke.

"Gentlemen, the signal will be as before—'Are you ready? Fire, one, two, three!'"

"Remember my former caution, gentlemen, and do not shoot before the word 'Fire!' or after the word 'Three!'"

An instant of silence followed, and then came the question:

"Are you ready?"

But before he could open his lips to pronounce the succeeding word agreed upon, Colonel Breytoune raised his weapon and fired point-blank at Walter, who remained upright, a sneering smile on his lips, while his hat flew high in the air, showing how narrow had been his escape.

"Colonel Breytoune adds attempted murder to his long list of accomplishments, I see," he quietly remarked, while the old doctor and Edgerton broke out in a storm of invective against the would-be assassin, and Breytoune, pale and trembling, awaited his fate, for he had witnessed Walter's skill as a marksman, and knew that his opponent could demand, and be entitled to, a return shot.

But the cold, cutting tones again broke out on the air as Langley addressed him:

"These weapons, sir, have never been pointed at any but supposed gentlemen, for I use other arms with which to kill curs."

"I will not disgrace them by aiming at you and taking your life, for I hold it in my hands."

"If you doubt it, look!"

A sea-gull was sailing over the waters not far from where they stood, and wheeling and, apparently without aiming, Walter fired, and the bird dropped stone-dead into the sea, shot through the head; and, handing his pistol to Edgerton, Langley walked to where his hat was lying with a bullet-hole through the crown, picked it up with a smile, and, without a word, walked to the beach, where he stood awaiting the arrival of the tug, Edgerton soon following with the case of pistols under his arm.

The tug soon hove in sight, when the doctor approached the two friends hurriedly, and clapping Walter on the shoulder, cried:

"My boy, you did nobly, nobly! but it was only what I expected of you."

"I cannot leave that poor fellow, as his condition is extremely precarious, and must return to the city with him; you understand?"

"Certainly, doctor, certainly, and thank you very much for your kindness in coming. My search will lead me I know not whither, so I will say good-by for a few days."

The old man grasped his out-tretched hand warmly, and, with tears in his kind eyes, said:

"Now, Walter, be careful. You know you are rash and impetuous, and often get into unnecessary trouble; let me beg of you to be cautious."

"Never fear, doctor; I'll be careful, so good-by!"

"Good-by, Walter; good-by, George, and may Heaven aid you in your search!"

The row-boat soon landed, and once aboard the tug the two young men seated themselves in the bow, while, in obedience to Langley's orders, the stanch little craft steamed saucily out to sea.

The sea was smooth, and they sped along merrily until nearing Fire Island, when George suddenly changed the conversation.

"Are you going to land at Babylon, Walter, and there take your yacht?"

"No; the wind is so light that it would take us forever to reach Bridgehampton, so I have decided to retain the tug and steam down on the coast."

"We stop at Bridgehampton?"

"Most certainly."

"But in all probability you will find that Miss Faulconer has already departed."

"It is precisely to find out what she has done that I am on my way there."

"Well, don't get angry."

"Angry?"

"Yes; your tone, if not your words, implies that you are not in the best of humor."

"Who would be, after the events of this morning?"

"True; so forget my remark."

"It is forgotten."

And this little cloud swept away, they once more resumed their friendly conversation, for a moment interrupted, which continued until they arrived at the wreck, where, the tug being stopped, Walter, jumping into the boat, was rowed close to the shore, where stood one of the life-savers, who informed him of Irene's departure, and he quickly returned on board, and they steamed off; but the propeller had made scarce a hundred revolutions when it suddenly stopped, and presently the engineer came on deck.

"Shaft's cracked, captain," he explained, "and it will take some time to fix it."

And there they lay all through the night and well into the next day before the damage was repaired, when they again steamed off, the sea, providentially, remaining in a state of quiet until Montauk was reached, and from information there obtained they headed for Bell Point Light.

A flaring blaze attracted their attention as they drew near, and the eyes of all were turned toward the burning building, when suddenly a shout was heard, and looking up they saw a vast black mass rapidly bearing down upon them, which crashed into the tug, striking it amidships, and it careened to port, turned over, and sunk.

Edgerton was in the pilot-house, while Langley was standing in the bows, and the latter, his foot catching in a cable coiled there, was dragged down by the suction, and, with a despairing cry, sunk to the bottom of the sea.

He had escaped the bullets only to be swallowed up by the waves!

CHAPTER XVI.

TRAPPED.

"It is our preserver!" cried the young girl, and then as the roof crashed in and the boy disappeared she shrunk back into her seat, covering her face with her hands to shut out the terrible sight that confronted her, while all the rest of the inmates of the boat gazed horror-stricken at the catastrophe which they were powerless to prevent.

But they pulled ashore as rapidly as they could, and, landing, made the boat fast and then began the difficult ascent of the cliff, climbing with difficulty in the darkness up the precipitous path which led to the plateau above, and as the leader of the crew the old man, whose sons followed closely after him, reached the top he turned with a warning motion and stopped suddenly, crouching down, while the others, reaching his side, also looked over the top of the bank at the strange scene that was spread before them.

A band of a dozen men encircled the light-house and were firing shot after shot at the lantern, while the shivering glass fell in fragments to the turf beneath, making it impossible for any one to venture out on the balcony, save at the risk of their lives, while a half-dozen of their comrades were endeavoring to force the door, but, as their exclamations of rage told, without success, for the staples sunk in the stone walls by Luke held firm and the iron bars retained the door firmly in its place, so at length the wreckers desisted for a moment and held a short consultation, which resulted in two of the band going into the still burning building and procuring some of the blazing timbers with which they returned to the light-house.

Placing the brands against the wooden door, they made trip after trip and finally piled the blazing wood high on the steps, while a light wind fanned the red cinders into a glowing flame, and the door soon began to crackle and burn, while the men kept piling more and more fuel on the flames.

Many were the exclamations which, though subdued, were none the less fervent, that broke

from between the clinched teeth of the old sea-captain and his three sons, while the quartette chafed at being unable to render any assistance to the inmates of the tower; for they were unaware that it was tenanted only by a helpless girl and an innocent child, who was but a mere infant, or they might have dared all to offer her aid.

And finally the door fell in with a crash, and the entrance of the tower lay open before them, while the wreckers, with a shout of triumph, rushed in, the rest of the band ceasing to fire at the same time, for their only object had been to prevent a second shower of fire such as had once descended from the balcony above upon their comrades, one of whom, terribly scorched and burned, had escaped to the cave and related what had befallen them.

As the band entered the tower they were confronted by another door which was at the foot of the steps leading up to the lantern and which was made of sheet-iron, but only fastened by a single bolt from the inside, which quickly gave way to the leverage exerted by the "jimmies" with which some of the band were provided, and they proceeded cautiously up the stairs, not knowing what unknown danger might confront them at any moment, for the shooting of their comrade in the lantern had been witnessed by some of the band, and they did not know at what instant the report of the revolver might ring out on the stillness of the winding stair and their leader fall back, shot to death.

But all was deathly still, and they crept on and upward stealthily, nearing the top step by step, until it seemed as if the girl were indeed doomed, for what could the frail girl do against the six well-armed desperadoes?

But suddenly the leader stopped—he had reached the top, and there another door confronted him, the one that led into the lantern, and this also was of iron, but much more massive than the one below, and one of the men who, before he had joined the wreckers had been a keeper in the light-house, whispered to the leader that on the other side of the door there was a landing, and that from there a dozen steps led up into the lantern proper through a trap in the floor and that the door was only fastened by one lock and could be easily forced.

But, try as they would, the door would not yield an inch, for the girl, realizing that the lower door had been forced as she listened at the top of the steps, had brought down the lounge and, placing one end against the upper door, saw with joy that the other end just reached the opposite wall and held the door so firmly braced that, confined as the wreckers would be in the steep and narrow stairway, they would be unable to force it.

In the mean time their comrades had ceased their fusillade and were congregated about the burning building, for the night was cold, and they, awaiting the course of events, were making themselves as comfortable as possible, stretched out on the ground, while more than one bottle passed rapidly from hand to hand and the contents fast disappeared.

While the old captain and his sons were watching the light-house, they saw a female figure rapidly flit around the lamps, turning them up, and increasing their flame, for they burned steadily on, the wind having almost subsided and not causing them to flicker.

"Great Jerusalem, father," whispered his eldest son, "there's nobody but a girl there!—we must do something to help her!"

"You're right, my lad," returned the old man, "an' if the ladies 'll stay here—"

"Yes, yes, go!" hurriedly interrupted Irene, "and see if you can render her any assistance."

"But pray be cautious!"

"Trust to us, miss, we'll be careful."

The wreckers around the fire, fearing no interruption, kept no watch, and therefore did not see the four figures that, circling far around, crawled on hands and knees toward the light-house, and so deeply were they immersed in their carouse, that they took no note of time, hoping only that the others would not return too soon and thus enable them to drink long and deeply, for the fiery liquor was having its effect, and the more they drank the more they craved.

So the four brave fellows gained an entrance unobserved, and soon stood in the vestibule, which was hot and stifling from the late fire, while a few scattered embers cast a faint glow over all the surroundings.

The closet door stood wide open, as did the door leading to the winding staircase, and, echoing down the steps, they could hear the voices of the wreckers above, and listening, soon understood that they were unable to force a door which baffled them, when a sudden idea entered the old man's brain, and was no sooner conceived than it was immediately put into execution.

Followed by the boys, he entered the store-room, where was a huge box filled with cotton wicks, while a large pile of oakum used in polishing the lamps, chimneys and glass, lay piled in one corner, and seizing a quantity of each of these materials, which example was followed by the other three, he placed it inside the

door, on the lower steps, and repeated the operation until it was piled high up, while mingled with it was some refuse stuff that was greasy with oil.

One of the lintels of the store-room door was somewhat worn, and was to have been replaced, so the beam which was to be used for that purpose, was standing up against the wall, and taking this, he braced the door leading to the steps with it, first preventing it from closing tightly by placing a piece of rock, with which one of the boys had armed himself, between the lower step and the door, and finding that the beam reached almost to the wall opposite so that the door could not be forced open from the inside.

He then lighted the mass of oakum and cotton wicks with a coal which he threw into the mass, which, fanned by the draft from the partly-opened door, began to smolder and throw out dense volumes of smoke.

High up the steps, near the door where the wreckers were at work, was a loop-hole, pierced through the massive masonry to afford light and air, and this acted as a chimney, drawing the smoke up, so that the band above, in an instant were enveloped in a cloud of stifling smoke, which choked and blinded them, and turning, they started down the steps.

But so dense was the vapor, so choking with its thickness and horrible the stench, that first one and then the other suffocated, succumbed, and in less time than the pen can trace the words, the whole of the band fell to the steep steps and rolled to the bottom, where they quickly gasped their last, crawling and struggling to reach the iron barrier which cut them off from air and life.

And in a few minutes more the door was thrown open, while the old man and his sons gazed with awe on the work they had wrought.

CHAPTER XVII.

APPEARANCES AND DISAPPEARANCES.

The heavy cable was firmly fastened about Walter's ankle, and he was dragged down deep beneath the waves, while the rope uncoiled until the block at the end of it floated to the surface of the water, and as the steamer plowed her way on, was caught in the propeller, and as it had not been stopped, was wound up, twisted about the blades of the screw until Langley felt that he was being dragged to the surface, and that some mysterious power was pulling on the cable.

Fortunately, before he came in contact with the whirling blades, the signal was given to stop the engine, and he rose to the surface, and clung to the rudder, while he exerted himself to release his foot from the circling coils, in which he soon succeeded, and then called lustily for help; but the overhanging stern muffled his cries, while the roar of escaping steam drowned all other noises, and left his appeal for help unheard, so that, hanging to the rudder, he realized that it would not be safe to remain there, as at any moment the machinery might be again set in motion, and the churning screw would drag him down into the boiling waters and crunch and tear him into a thousand morsels.

He therefore climbed up as far as he could, and then, leaping far out, plunged headlong into the sea; but he was not yet through with his troubles, for as he struck the surface of the water, his head encountered a floating spar or beam, which struck him heavily, and he was knocked into almost instant insensibility, while lying on his back across the piece of wreck, he was helpless, and tossed hither and thither at the mercy of the winds and the tides and the currents.

As the crash of the collision sounded out on the still night air, when the iron prow of the steamer crunched into the wooden sides of the tug, Irene, turning hurriedly, witnessed the catastrophe, and with this accumulation of horrors clustering about her, felt sick and faint, as she stared down on the wreck below, with a prayer for the poor souls who had thus been hurled so suddenly from Time to Eternity; for the full moon shed a silvery radiance over land and sea, and the whole scene, spread almost at her feet, stood out in startling distinctness, so that she plainly saw Walter come to the surface and climb up on the rudder, although she could not distinguish his features, and as she looked she saw him plunge into the waters, and in a moment more the pale face appeared floating as if sustained by some unseen object, but was so ghastly in its hue, as the pale moonlight flooded down upon it, that she realized that he was unconscious and powerless to aid himself, while at the same moment the propeller began to revolve and to churn the water into yeasty foam, while the huge vessel moved off from the spot, without lowering a single boat or endeavoring in any way to aid the victims of her pilot's or lookout's criminal carelessness.

And the girl, without saying a word to her aunt, sprung to her feet and fairly flew down the dangerous declivity, escaping a dangerous fall by a miracle, and reaching the boat panting and trembling in every limb.

With a strength which the tremendous excitement under which she was laboring gave

her, she pushed the heavy craft far out in the cove, and then, grasping two of the heavy oars in her hands, began to row as best she could toward the pale face, that was ghastly in the moonlight like a waxen mask, while the heavy ash oars were almost more than her strength could handle; the boat dragged like a mass of lead beneath her frail strokes, and her delicate hands were blistered and torn as she struggled on, slowly but surely nearing the floating body, which, for aught she knew, might be a corpse.

But she struggled bravely on, and finally drew alongside the mass of wreckage which supported the young man, and drawing the oars into the boat, leaned over the side and recognized who it was that she had come to save, while a cry broke from her lips; the first sound that had issued from them since she had started out on her toilsome journey:

"Oh, Walter, Walter! Have I only arrived in time to rescue your corpse?"

And she bent far over and caught him by the arms to lift him into the boat, if her strength were equal to the task; but as she leaned over the gunwale the boat careened, and she, being overbalanced, fell into the water alongside her lover, while the boat drifted far away, being pushed from her as she tried to regain her equilibrium.

One of the wrecker crew, who had drank less than his comrades, began to realize that they were staying away much longer than was necessary to force an entrance into the lantern, and as it still shone out clear and bright, he realized that some unforeseen obstacle barred their way, so, with the sapient wisdom of an intoxicated man, he decided that he would investigate the matter, and staggering to his feet, he started with wavering steps in the direction of the tower, which he finally reached, and stumbled up the steps, and entering the vestibule, was instantly seized, bound, and thrown into the store-room.

But it was not long before the wreckers, stupefied by the liquor though they were, began to realize that something must have happened, and one of the men who was accustomed to act as their leader when the captain was not with them, aroused himself, and with sundry blows and kicks and oaths succeeded in arousing the sleepy crew scattered around, and they grumblingly arose, and then, as a few words were spoken to them, the fumes of the liquor were dissipated as if by magic, and a feeling of awe came over them, for they could not understand the awful stillness which reigned, while the mysterious disappearance of their companions awed them still further.

They could not comprehend it, for they knew that one frail girl could not have defended herself long against the six desperate men who had forced an entrance, and they believed that the tower contained no other defenders, for the entrance to the light-house was on the opposite side from where they were gathered, and could not be seen from there, and it was with cautious steps that they approached the tall white column of stone that shone weirdly in the moonlight, like some great ghost confronting them, until they arrived opposite the door, when, with a wild shriek, they turned and fled, tumbling over each other in their eagerness to escape, as they saw standing in the doorway three tall figures clad in white which advanced toward them menacingly, with outstretched arms and waving hands, and low, inarticulate moans, while, as they glanced over their shoulders, they saw standing on the balcony a figure that loomed gigantic through the clouds of vapor which enveloped it, clad also in white, while the rays of the lamps struggling through the smoke and barely piercing its dense folds, lit up the figure with an unearthly glare.

And as they ran toward the still burning building, their teeth chattering with fear, still another apparition confronted them, for, leaping from the very midst of the red-hot coals, bounded a figure with an unearthly screech, waving in each hand a burning torch, which sparkled and crackled in the crisp air; while in the demoniacal vision they recognized the spirit—as they thought—of Luke, which, rising from its bed of fire, rushed toward them in a very whirlwind of flame as if to visit upon them the fate which they had so cruelly wrought upon its former tenement—the lad's body.

And if they were terrified before, now their fright was trebled, and with wild cries and exclamations of fear, they fairly flew down the precipitous sides of the bluff, tumbling head over heels in their efforts to escape the demon which seemed to follow fast in their hurried course, until finally the plateau was deserted save by the boy, who, despite his pains and aches and bruises, could not suppress a ringing laugh which sounded satanic in its wild glee on the ears of the skurrying crowd.

But as the boy turned and flung the blazing brands into the ruins of the dwelling, his ears caught a faint cry, which was borne to him on the gentle night-breeze which was softly blowing from the sea, and as he listened intently, stepping quietly in the direction of the sound, the cry was repeated, and it seemed the cry of

a woman in distress, and Luke, forgetting his burns and bruises, hurried to the edge of the cliff, and shading his sight with his blistered hand, gazed with searching eye out on the moonlit waves a half-mile away from shore, while a dark object nearer him was apparently the boat from which they had been lost.

Again the cry came floating over the waters, the woman's tones piteous in their appeal for help, and not hesitating an instant Luke stepped back, and taking a few hurried steps, sprung far out from the cliff and leaped into the sea, full forty feet below, and with a loud splash disappeared beneath the waters, to rise again in an instant and strike out steadily in the direction of the voice, which grew fainter and fainter as he approached, until it was hushed, just as he reached, and clambered into, the boat, and seizing the oars in his scorched hands, he turned the boat's prow in the direction of the bodies, which he could now plainly see, and coming alongside, lifted the girl, who, by this time, was completely exhausted, into the craft, recognizing in her the one he had snatched from the waves the night the "Circassian" was wrecked, and laid her carefully in the stern of the boat, and then turned his attention to the man, who, completely stunned, and with the blood flowing from a deep cut in his forehead, had providentially fallen across the beam, and the sea being almost like glass, had suffered no harm from the water, and with much difficulty, succeeded in getting him aboard, when he again took the oars and pulled for the cove, which he soon reached, but at the expense of much pain and suffering from his wounded hands; and leaving them there he climbed up the cliff, hurried to the light house, where he was met by the girl and four strange men, but who quickly followed him to the boat and aided him to carry the two lifeless bodies to the tower, where the girl was taken charge of by Carrie, being placed on the lounge in the lantern, while the men attended to Walter; all doing their work so well that in a few moments both were completely restored, when they all assembled in the lantern, where Langley, oblivious of the surrounding persons, caught Irene in his arms, and kissed and thanked her a thousand times, while she did not seem to object a particle.

But suddenly Carrie Homer, looking about, cried in affright:

"Where is the child?"

"She followed me down-stairs, but in the confusion of your arrival, I, for an instant, forgot her."

And she hurried down the steps, only to find no trace of Lillian, while the empty store-room showed that the wrecker had also escaped!

CHAPTER XVIII.

HUNG BY THE HEELS.

WHEN the collision occurred, George Edgerton was in the pilot-house, talking with the man at the wheel, who was relating to him some of those sea yarns for which sailors are noted, and when the crash came was knocked violently down, his head striking against the sides of the house, rendering him, for the moment, unconscious of what was happening, while the old sailor flew head-first out of the window in front and was drawn down by the suction of the tug as she sunk, while the pilot-house, loosened by the shock, floated off as the hull went down, and drifted away from the scene with Edgerton inside.

In a short time he recovered consciousness, and instantly recalled what had happened, but saw that he was, for the present at least, safe and almost unharmed, so, climbing out of the opening through which the steersman had plunged, he quickly clambered onto the roof, where he philosophically stretched himself at full length, lying on his back, and, taking a cigar from his pocket, began to smoke, as coolly as if seated in a room at his club, wrapping his overcoat closely about him and feeling entirely comfortable, for not a drop of water had entered the pilot-house, and he was not wet in the slightest degree.

Calmly gazing at the fire which blazed high on the bluff above him, he fell to thinking, and his thoughts naturally reverted to Walter; yet, strange to say, he did not worry about him, being a fatalist, and believing that a man who had escaped the bullets from the pistols held by two expert marksmen could not die the same day from the effects of a collision, and, knowing that his partner was an expert swimmer, and seated in the bow of the boat, would have time to spring overboard, and in all probability reach the shore, dismiss the matter from his mind with a muttered reflection that was perfectly characteristic of the man:

"Lucky I didn't have to jump overboard; my knowledge of the natatorial art is just sufficient to take me to the bottom like a stone."

And as he laughed to himself, the cigar was thrown into the water, and, finding that there was a ledge around the edge of the roof, which would prevent his rolling off, he turned over on his side and incontinently dropped off into a profound sleep, while he, lying in a constrained position as he was, snored and choked and grunt-

ed, until it seemed as if a whole drove of sea-lions were enjoying a siesta in the neighborhood.

And he thus drifted on until he arrived at a point opposite to where Luke had been landed by the Indian maiden and near by which place was the entrance to the wreckers' cave, while a sentinel, hidden in the heavy growth of bushes that grew in wild profusion along the banks, was kept continually on watch, and hearing the unusual sound which came to him over the waters, peered out through the bushes and saw the pilot-house floating by, with a human figure stretched out on the roof, and sleeping soundly.

Signaling to others of the band who were inside, they quickly joined him, when the man on guard pointed out to them the floating objects, and as all was fish that came to their net, they leaped into a row-boat lying near and pulled toward Edgerton, who lay unconscious of this approaching danger and powerless to ward it off had he known of it; and, drawing alongside, they made fast to the floating house, and turning toward the shore, began to tow the wreck toward the land, and soon grounded it in shallow water.

The sudden shock awakened George, and he lazily sat up, thinking that his raft—if the term may be used in this connection—had grounded and that he would be able to reach the shore without difficulty; but he was quickly undeceived as a pistol was unceremoniously thrust into his face, and three or four men surrounded and quickly bound him, while George murmured to himself, as if with an intense appreciation of the occurrences:

"Hum! First shipwrecked, then captured by bandits!"

"If this keeps on I'll be in a first-class position to write a sensational novel."

"It would take with the more romantic portion of the fair sex, although if they were here they would not find it so exciting as to read of it; for a more villainous set of cut-throats I never came in contact with."

"Where did you come from?" demanded one of the wreckers, interrupting his train of thoughts.

"New York," calmly returned Edgerton, stifling a mighty yawn.

"What! on that?" pointing to the pilot-house.

"Precisely; it is an invention that I have just perfected, combining a raft and state-room; but the only defect is its speed, and if the winds and tides are contrary it is difficult to arrive at your destination."

"The thing will drift—could you suggest—"

"Enough of this," sternly interrupted the leader, who realized by this time that Edgerton was quizzing him; "we will see if the captain cannot find some way of forcing you to answer."

"Blindfold him, men, and follow!"

When the handkerchief was taken from his eyes Edgerton found himself in a small, rock-walled room, barely ten feet square, which was lighted by a lantern hanging from a massive steel chain that ran through a pulley which was suspended from the center of the vaulted ceiling, while from this pulley the chain ran down and was fastened to a hook sunk into the wall at one side.

Seated on a three-legged stool, nearly opposite the door by which they had entered, was a man whom George supposed to be the chief of the gang, as the others addressed him as "Captain," and treated him with a certain deference which was wanting in their intercourse with each other.

Busily engaged in conversation as he was with two low-browed, brutal-looking ruffians, he waved the new-comers into silence, while he listened eagerly to what was being said, and thus George stood for a full half-hour, boiling with impatience until finally the chief arose, taking a package of papers from one of the men with whom he had been talking, and saying:

"Then, in the future, you are with us, and the hounds of the law will never find you."

"You shall have what I promised you for these," designating the roll of papers he held, "as soon as I finish with this gentleman," pointing to George as he spoke.

"And now, you will take the oath, and be initiated into the mysteries of the cave, which is our dwelling-place, and remember we hesitate not; but we punish treachery with death!"

"Betray us, and wherever you may be—on trackless plain or in pathless forest—mid Arctic snows or torrid heat—on mountain or in valley—on sea or on land—waking or sleeping—the knife of our messenger will surely find you and you will die a traitor's death!"

"Do you understand and do you accept?"

"We understand and we accept."

"Then so be it."

In response to a bell which he pulled, a messenger instantly appeared and, receiving his instructions, led the two recruits away to be received as members of the band, while the leader, turning to Edgerton, said:

"Well, sir, what do you here?"

"Nothing," imperturbably returned George.

"What brought you here?"

"Your fellow-bandits."

"Have a care, sir. I hold the power of life and death here, in this cave!"

"Hold it tight; it might get away!"

"No more insolence! Who are you?"

"I am, sir, that much-maligned individual, the Wandering Jew, and I beg of you to let me continue my wanderings."

"Ha! you mock me; we will soon see what effect a little discipline will have on you; for by Mephistopheles! my patron saint, I will swing you by the heels to yonder pulley, if in three minutes you do not divulge who you are!"

"And by the blue vault that shines above earth and sea, I defy you, and dare you do your worst, Roy F—"

In an instant the hand of the wrecker chief-tain was on his mouth, and the words were choked back into his throat, and in an instant he was doubly gagged, a rope was bound around his ankles, and the lamp being lowered, the chain was fastened to his feet, and he was drawn up to the roof, where he swung head downward, his hands being unbound, hanging to the floor, which his finger-tips just touched, and the blood began to rush to his brain, and his eyeballs to start from their sockets.

CHAPTER XIX.

RECOGNITION.

THE search for the child was continued without any favorable result, and they were forced to relinquish their efforts without finding the slightest trace of the missing Lillian, being driven to the conclusion that the wrecker who had escaped had succeeded in abducting her, and they all returned to the lantern, where the old sailor related how he and two of his sons had covered themselves with white wrappings, made of the curtains which were used in the lantern when the summer sun sent its fierce rays beating down upon the glass that inclosed it, while he laughed at the recollection of the skurrying crowd as they fled in every direction; and the girl, explaining that, hearing no further attempts to force the upper door, she had cautiously opened it an inch or two, and that the dense clouds of smoke which poured in had driven her out onto the balcony, while she realized that some one must have come to her rescue and smoked the wreckers out, like rats in a hole.

"But how did you escape?" she asked, turning to Luke, who, grimy with smoke and cinders, and dripping wet, presented a most comical appearance, although the fact that he was suffering from burns and bruises removed the ludicrous state of the matter from his friends' minds.

"By an interposition of Providence."

"When the roof crashed in, I was deliberating whether it would not be better to leap into the flames and end my agony at once, but fortunately restrained myself and waited."

"When the final crash came, I leaped for the chimney, hoping to be able to hang inside until the smoke had partially cleared away, but the bricks were so hot that they blistered my hands, and I was forced to release my hold."

"As I slipped through the flue, I expected to become jammed before I fell far, and baked to death, but the chimney was an old-fashioned one, and I slipped through without any serious damage."

"But when I thought I was at the bottom, a yawning gulf seemed to open below me, and I dropped down—it seemed hundreds of feet—until I suddenly sunk to my waist in a cold mass of water and ashes which received me as gently as would have a bed of down."

"There is an abandoned cistern there," interrupted the girl, "and the ashes from the grates were allowed to fall into it through holes pierced under each grate to the chimney."

"That explains the matter, then," continued the boy. "I waited for some time, when finally the chimney fell over, having been built on a wooden foundation, and I then saw the moonlight shining not far above my head."

"With much difficulty I succeeded in climbing out, and, peering over the edge as best I could—for the heat was terrible—I conceived the idea of giving the wreckers, whom I saw going toward the tower, a fright."

"I therefore picked up two blazing pieces of timber and rushed for them just after they had been confronted by our friends here, and they, doubtless thinking that his Satanic Majesty was after them, could not run fast enough."

And again the boy laughed at the recollection.

In the mean time Walter was sitting on the lounge, his head bent forward and resting on his knees, while he seemed oblivious of all the surroundings, as indeed he was.

He had a terrible task before him—the task of acquainting Irene with her father's terrible fate, for that it was unknown to her was evident from her gay and happy manner, as she sat by him, joyous at the thought of being with the man she loved, and in the thought that she, a frail girl, had saved his life.

For had she not gone to his rescue he must undoubtedly have perished from exposure, being unable to call for help, or assist himself in the slightest degree.

"What is it, Walter?" she whispered, shyly,

for she was a modest, timid, bashful girl, and was not yet at ease in the presence of her lover.

"Lillian, I have much to tell you, and Heaven knows it will be terribly hard for me to thus grieve you; but, my child, you must nerve yourself for the terrible shock, for you will need all your fortitude to bear up under the blow."

"Oh, Walter! what is it?"

In obedience to a sign from Mrs. Harcourt, the rest of the party left the lantern and went out onto the balcony, leaving Langley and Irene alone.

Seating the girl in a chair, Langley, pacing up and down the confined limits of the lantern, began his words, which were of such terrible importance to Irene:

"When I returned from Philadelphia on the day before yesterday, I learned for the first time, that another dark mystery had overshadowed New York—the mystery of a murder!"

"Of the assassins there was no clew; but the victim was well-known and highly respected."

The girl sat unconscious of how nearly his words concerned her, and wondering where all this prelude tended.

"He was alone in his house—his house which—prepare yourself, my child," as he knelt at her feet and taking both her hands, gazed pityingly in her face, while she began to tremble.

"Which was situated on one of the most fashionable thoroughfares in the city; on Fifth avenue, Madison Square!"

"Oh, Walter! Not my father?"

"It was your father, Irene!"

"My father dead—murdered!"

"Stabbed to death in the dark from behind by a cowardly assassin."

"Murdered! dead!" she shrieked.

"Oh, father! father! alone, while I— Oh!" and she sunk into the outstretched arms of her lover, who tenderly laid her on the couch, and hurriedly called for help, when Mrs. Harcourt and Carrie Homer rushed into the room and began to minister to her, while the six men left the lantern and proceeded down the winding stairs, Walter stopping a moment to reply to a question from Irene's aunt.

"What have you said to her?"

"I have told her that her father is dead."

"Dead!"

"Yes; murdered in his library on the morning that you sailed."

"My brother murdered?"

"Stabbed to death by burglars."

"Oh, my poor child, now you are indeed alone!"

And bursting into a flood of tears, the brave old lady continued to bathe Irene's brow, while Walter Langley, closing the door softly, rejoined the others who were below.

In a few words he informed them of the fearful message he had brought, and, amid expressions of sympathy from all, followed them to a point a little distance from the tower, where, concealed by a slight rise in the ground, lay the bodies of the suffocated wreckers, lying in distorted attitudes that betokened the agony they had undergone before death had come to their relief.

As he came in sight of the bodies Luke bent over them, and, as he scanned their features, suddenly started back with a cry of surprise, as he traced in the lineaments of one of the bodies features which seemed familiar to him; yet they were so blackened by the smoke that had suffocated him that for a few moments he was in doubt; but with a repugnance he could not overcome he wiped the face of the dead man until he could distinguish it perfectly, and satisfying himself that he was not mistaken, he turned to the others who were watching him in astonishment.

"That man has been my shadow ever since I can recall anything."

"He was the first person whom I ever knew, when a mere child I found myself on an outward-bound vessel in his arms."

"I recall indistinctly awakening from a long sleep, and prior to that can recollect nothing."

"Since then, wherever I have been, he was never far from my side; claiming that he was my brother, and advising and counseling me."

"At school abroad he lived in the same town; when my love for the sea induced me to ship for China, he obtained a berth on the same vessel, and always after that exerted himself to procure me a place on board a good vessel, until, reaching Halifax, he opposed my sailing for New York, and I did as he advised."

"So persistent was he in keeping me away from the United States that at last my suspicions were aroused, and I determined to come here despite his opposition and endeavor to solve the mystery of my birth, for he always turned the conversation when I approached that subject, telling me that I had better rest content and not probe the question too deeply, for the history was one of sin and shame."

"We went by the name of Leighton, and Luke Leighton is the only name I know."

"I will give him a decent grave—the others we will throw into the sea!"

And in a few moments the four bodies drifted off on the outgoing tide, while the body of Ira Leighton, as the boy called him, was buried near the spot where lay the three light-house-keepers,

and a stone was placed at the head of the grave to mark his resting-place.

And the little party then returned to the tower and waited for a notification from above that they might ascend.

CHAPTER XX.

BURIED ALIVE.

As Edgerton swung into the air, Captain Wrake, who had left the chamber for a moment, returned and gazed at the suspended man with fiendish satisfaction; but, as the poor fellow hung head downward, a newspaper which was folded in the breast-pocket of his coat fell out and fluttered to the ground, and lay open almost at the wrecker's feet, and, as he glanced at it mechanically, some words, printed in large, bold-faced type, caught his eye, and in an instant he had caught it from the ground, while he called out:

"Lower that man, instantly!"

And as Edgerton was released from his bonds, Wrake read eagerly the article which had attracted his attention, and which seemed to be of deep interest to him.

It was thus written:

"THE FAULCONER MURDER."

NO CLEW TO THE ASSASSINS.

BURGLARS BELIEVED TO HAVE DONE THE DASTARDLY DEED.

"Despite the untiring efforts of the detectives, no clew has yet been obtained of the assassins of Mr. Lucius Faulconer, who was found murdered in his palatial residence, on Madison Square, yesterday morning. A thorough examination of the premises reveals the fact that entrance was gained through a window in the basement, and that robbery was the motive, for a large sum of money had disappeared from the safe, Mr. Henry N. Wilson, Mr. Faulconer's attorney, having deposed that the latter had received several thousand dollars the day before from the sale of some property, and had taken the amount home with him, intending to use it for some purpose with which he, Mr. Wilson, was unacquainted."

"The detectives have theories, and the fact that two well-known cracksmen have disappeared from their usual haunts gives rise to the idea that they are the probable culprits. Telegraphic descriptions of the two men were sent in every direction this morning, and it is believed that they will soon be captured and brought back to the city."

"In the mean time the entire force is on the alert, and no stone will be left unturned to bring the red-handed murderers to the bar of justice, where it is to be hoped that speedy punishment will be meted out to them."

The paper fell from the hand of the wrecker captain, and he stood for a moment in deep thought; then, turning to Edgerton, who leaned coolly against the wall with folded arms, he asked him, abruptly:

"Do you know this—this man Faulconer?"

"My former antecedents and acquaintance can be of no interest to you; but as I understand your motive, I will tell you that I did know the gentleman to whom you refer—he was my uncle."

"And this is true?"

"What?"

"This reference to this—murder."

The word came hissing through his teeth, and his lips were ashen in hue, while he shook like an aspen; but recovering himself by a mighty effort, he waved to the two men who belonged to his band to leave them, and, they having left the room, he turned to Edgerton for his answer:

"It is true," replied the young man, simply.

"You were in the city at the time?"

"I was."

"And visited the house?"

"And visited the house."

"And you saw the—"

"I saw the corpse, 'Captain Wrake!'" thundered Edgerton, as he stepped forward, while the wrecker crouched and shrunk before the towering form.

"And I saw the ghastly wound in his back where the steel of the assassin had sunk deep into the flesh, snatching away his life like a thief in the night!"

"I saw the dark stain which dyed his coat, the chair, the desk, the carpet with its crimson hues, and which can no more be washed from those articles than it can be scoured from the red hands of the murderer!"

"And I saw the cold, pale face, the gray hair clotted with his gore, and I thought I would rather that my forehead were as waxen pale than bear upon it the brand of Cain!"

"Enough!" blurted the wrecker chief.

"Without there!"

And as the two men returned, he spoke to them:

"Gag and bind that man and take him to the main hall, and there await my coming."

"You know too much, my brawny friend, and we will tie your tongue so firmly that you never can divulge your knowledge."

And as George Edgerton was led from the room, he took the newspaper, and holding it to the lamp which stood in one corner, he watched it burn until nothing but the ashes remained.

He then followed the others, and proceeding along a narrow passage soon entered the main

hall, where most of the wreckers were assembled and to which the prisoner had already been brought.

Seating himself in his accustomed place, while the band gathered in a semicircle in front of him, he addressed them:

"Men, this person here," designating George as he spoke, "has confessed that he came hither as a spy."

"He belongs, by his own acknowledgment, to the service of the United States, particularly to the customs department, and, having obtained a clew to our whereabouts, thought to obtain reward and promotion by becoming one of our band and then betraying us."

"What shall be his fate?"

"Death!" cried the band, as one man.

"And by what means?"

"Hang him!"

"Shoot the dog!"

"Drown him!"

"Roast him before a slow fire!"

"Starve him to death!" came a louder cry than all the rest as the members of the band ceased their clamors.

"Yes, yes, that is it; starve him to death in the lower pit, and let his fate be a warning to all others who would act the spy and the traitor."

And the fiendish proposal found immediate favor with the bloodthirsty wretches, who danced about madly.

"Well, then, so be it," returned the captain; "but fall back, all of you, and stand out of hearing distance. I wish to ask him one more question before he is taken away."

And then, leaning forward, he whispered a question in the ear of the prisoner; but the latter being gagged was unable to answer, and the wrecker was about to remove the bandage from his mouth, when he reflected that Edgerton might betray to the band something of what he knew if allowed to speak, so untying one of his hands he gave him a pencil and held the blank page of a book so that he could write, and, in answer to the question he had put to the prisoner, the following sentence was written, at the sight of which the wrecker's face glowed with exultation, while his entire bearing gave witness to the satisfaction he experienced in reading the hastily-written words:

"Irene Faulconer was wrecked at sea on the same day that her father was killed. She is undoubtedly dead!"

In an instant the arm was tightly drawn behind his back again, and Wrake, calling two of his men, and bidding one of them provide himself with a torch, the three left the cavern and entered a long, vaulted corridor which led out to one side and which descended rapidly, being so narrow that they could not walk abreast, but were compelled to advance single file, the torch-bearer preceding Edgerton, and the others following him.

They continued to march thus for some time, the path getting steeper and steeper, until they arrived at the end of the passage, where there was a stout door so skillfully painted as to resemble the rock, and so discolored by the stains made by the water as it trickled down its face, that it could scarce be distinguished from the natural walls; but the man in front, who was evidently familiar with the den, found and turned the handle, which was made to resemble a small projection of the rock, without difficulty, and, opening the masked door, disclosed a dark, noisome cell, which was not more than seven feet in length, nor four in width, and which contained not a single article of any description, if two rusty chains fastened to iron staples let into the rock be excepted.

And into this cell George was pushed, his heart failing him as he surveyed the circumscribed walls, and he turned to the men to see if he could discover one ray of hope; but the damp rock was not more hard or set than were their faces, and he gave himself up for lost.

The rings on the chains were clasped around his wrists, being fastened by a steel spring which held them firmly in their place, the bandages were cast from his arms, and then ordering the two men to return to the main hall, and waiting until their footsteps died away in the distance, Captain Wrake, placing the torch in a crevice in the floor, closed the door behind him as he stood facing the prisoner as a further precaution, and then spoke to Edgerton:

"You are doubtless aware that you have no hope now on earth and that you will die a lingering death."

"You said a moment ago that you knew me; if you do, and I do not doubt it, for years have not altered me much—you understand the reason of this action, for I have sworn that your whole race shall perish from off the face of the earth, and would soon have found you in New York had you not found me."

"I did not seek you sooner, for I needed means to carry out my projects, and of these I am now amply possessed."

"The work I have to perform is not great, for chance and fate have aided in rendering my task easier, and I shall soon accomplish it."

"You are left here to die."

"I could mitigate your sufferings by placing

a pistol to your head and ending your life at once; but the laws of our band are inviolate, and what the majority says rules."

"They say that you shall starve to death, and the sentence shall be executed; but to-night at least you shall not suffer, for I would prolong your agony."

"Here,"—taking a huge loaf from under the cloak he wore—"is bread; the water in the corner of the cell is palatable."

"Good-night, and pleasant dreams!"

And with a mocking laugh the wrecker took the torch in his hand, left the cell, and shut the door behind him, crying:

"One!"

Edgerton was in darkness as deep as that of the tomb, and no possible chance of escape suggested itself.

CHAPTER XXI.

"TWO!"

THEY waited thus for some time until the afternoon sun had long passed the meridian, when they saw rapidly steaming toward them from the west, a small, low black steamer, which plowed her way through the waters at an astonishing rate of speed; so that she was soon opposite the cove, where there was a jingling of bells, her machinery was stopped, and she lay to, gently heaving on the scarcely perceptible waves.

She was a revenue-cutter, as could be readily told by the flag of that branch which fluttered at her mainmast, she being schooner-rigged, as well as by the uniformed officers and men that were engaged about her decks.

As she came to a stand-still she fired a gun to attract the attention of those on shore, while at the same moment a boat shot out from under her stern, having been lowered to leeward, what wind there was being off-shore, and pulled in the direction of the shore, an officer with gold-laced cap sitting in the stern-sheets and holding the tiller-ropes.

As they drew near the beach the prow swung sharply around, and in obedience to two orders quickly given, the oarsmen stopped rowing and began to "back water," thus bringing the boat, stern on, to shore, when the officer leaped out, and followed by four of the crew, climbed up the steep path, and came toward the light-house, while Walter and Luke advanced to meet them, lifting their hats as they came within speaking distance, in response to his courteous salute.

"Information was brought to New London this morning, gentlemen," began the officer, "by a coasting schooner, to the effect that there had been trouble here, and that the keepers have been foully dealt with—in fact, murdered."

"Can you tell me anything regarding the matter?"

"It is as you say, sir," returned Luke, who, having been present during the affair, naturally became the spokesman of the party, and he proceeded to relate the incidents as they had passed, keeping his own share in the background as much as he could.

When he had finished, the officer again spoke:

"This is indeed a serious affair, and one that deserves immediate attention."

"Unfortunately, I am so situated that I can render but small service, and must receive full instructions from headquarters before I can act as I would desire."

"Can I see the ladies?"

"Most assuredly, sir," answered Walter, who felt that this was a question that concerned him.

"If you will kindly await my return, I will inform them of your wish," and leaving the little group, he hastened to the lantern.

Knocking on the door, he entered in obedience to a gentle "Come in!" from the other side, and found Irene much calmer, but with her eyes and face giving evidence of a violent storm of weeping; but she extended her hand to him, and he, taking it and pressing it warmly, whispered a few words of cheer and consolation to her, and then turned to Mrs. Harcourt.

"The revenue-cutter 'Hornet' has arrived, in response to the message I sent to New London, and her commander would be glad to see the ladies."

"Will you receive him here, or will you descend and meet him below?"

"Ask him to come up at once," with a glance at the two girls, who silently bowed acquiescence.

"We will be glad to see him and to thank him for his kindness in responding so promptly."

In a few moments Walter returned, ushering in the officer, who stood, cap in hand, the beau ideal of a gallant sailor.

"Mrs. Harcourt," began Walter, "allow me to present to you"—and he hesitated for an instant.

"Lieutenant Murray, madame," added the new arrival, bowing low.

"Lieutenant," began the old lady, "you have our kindest thanks, mine, and I am sure, my niece's."

"Lieutenant Murray, let me introduce you to my niece, Miss Faulconer, and also to Miss

Homer, the daughter of the keeper who was so foully dealt with."

"Ladies, my only regret is that I arrive so late; allow me to express my sorrow for what has passed and the belief that your troubles are now over."

"Owing to reasons which I cannot explain, I can only leave six men with you; but they will serve to defend the light-house against any further attacks, and as soon as I can do so I will inform the department of these occurrences, and would ask that you mention them to no one, should there be any visitors to this portion of the Sound."

"It is always best to keep these matters secret until action can be taken, in order that our adversaries may not be informed of our projected movements."

"I warned the captain and crew of the coaster, and they promised strict compliance with my wishes."

"The men whom I will leave will require shelter; where can they find it?" he continued, turning to the daughter of the former light-house-keeper.

"The vestibule below will accommodate them if they have beds."

"They will bring their hammocks, which they can easily sling; and I will send a quantity of provisions ashore, as I imagine that you are short of rations."

"Everything we had was burned up with the house; but, fortunately, I had brought some food here," pointing to the basket, which was only half empty.

"And now, ladies, have you any further commands? for I must hasten my return, as I risk my commission every minute that I delay."

"One moment, lieutenant, if you please," interposed Mrs. Harcourt; "there is something you can do for us."

"My brother—Irene, Miss Faulconer's, father—we have just learned, was murdered in New York on the morning that we sailed in the *Circassian*."

"We are very anxious to reach the city."

"Can you not take us to New London, whence we can proceed by rail?"

"You would add much to our indebtedness to you, and—"

"The *Hornet*, and such poor accommodations as she possesses, are yours, madam, and I am only too glad to be able to offer them to you."

"Will you soon be ready?"

"In ten minutes."

"Then I will return to the *Hornet*, and send the men and provisions ashore, when you can come aboard."

"Can I, too, ask if you will furnish me transportation, also, lieutenant?" asked Walter.

"Certainly, sir, certainly; you can escort the ladies to the vessel."

In a moment more he had disappeared, and Mrs. Harcourt, Irene and Carrie had exchanged farewells, the latter promising to visit them in New York as soon as was practicable, and shaking hands with Walter, she told them all good-by, when they departed, leaving her alone.

Below they found the old sailor and his sons, who were about to leave, and abundant were the gifts that were forced on them, when they also left, and entering their boat, were soon far out at sea, the wind being favorable and their sail being set.

Finally the soldiers were landed, and the two ladies, proceeding to the beach, entered the row-boat and started for the vessel, after thanking Luke again and again, he determining to remain for a time at Bell Point, in case of any new events; but promising to see them again in the near future, and assuring Walter that he would endeavor to find some trace of George Edgerton the next day.

Getting into the small row-boat which Carrie used, he rowed alongside of the others until they reached the cutter, and then lay on his oars, watching the vessel until she was nearly out of sight, for evening was coming on, and it would soon be dark.

As the *Hornet* steamed off, the commanding officer called all of the crew aft, and spoke to them.

"My lads," said he, "I want to say just a few words. This trip must be known to no one; the ends of justice would be defeated were it known."

"Have I your promise?"

"Ay, ay, sir!" was the hearty response from each and every one.

"Thank you. I know that I can trust you; for a truer set of men never trod the decks of ship. That is all."

"Three cheers for Lieutenant Murray!" shouted some hardy spirit, and they were given with a will, when the crew dispersed about the deck, attending to their duties.

Luke lay on his oars as the darkness settled down over the sea, thinking of those who had gone, with a sigh of regret that his life had not been cast in their sphere, when he was aroused from his reflections by a shock which nearly overturned the frail craft in which he sat, and in a moment he was seized by half a dozen rough

hands, dragged into the larger craft, which had run him down, and stretched in the bottom of the boat, while in the dark face of one of his assailants he recognized the features of Captain Wrake.

But as he fell he writhed like an eel from the hands of the wreckers, sprung to his feet, and showered a half-dozen blows full in their faces before they could defend themselves.

But the hand of the chief of the band was raised and descended like a flash, and the short cudgel he held fell on Luke's head with crushing force, knocking him insensible into the sea, while the chief cried:

"Two!" as the water engulfed the body.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING.

THE Hornet steamed steadily on, and in not many hours arrived at New London, and sailing up the Thames River, cast anchor near the city, while the three passengers, unable to rest quietly on board through anxiety, entered one of the boats and were soon set ashore; but as Lieutenant Murray, who had been assisting Irene to climb the somewhat steep steps which led up to the pier, was descending, his foot slipped on the ice which covered the planks, and he fell headlong into the boat below, before he could catch himself, and striking the thwart was severely cut about the forehead, and lay, breathing stertorously, in the bottom of the yawl, from whence he was picked up by the crew, who idolized their young commander, and carefully placed in the stern-sheets, when they pulled back to the cutter, Mrs. Harcourt, Irene and Langley proceeding up the pier, unconscious of the accident, they having thanked the officer and made their adieux to him and left him standing there watching them as they disappeared in the darkness, while he sighed heavily, wondering if he would ever see the lovely girl again.

When they reached the boat, the falls were hooked on and the boat swung up on the davits, when the wounded man was carried to his cabin, where the ship's surgeon examined his condition, and shook his head solemnly as he found that the blow had resulted in concussion of the brain, which would cause grave consequences.

And so it proved, for not many hours had passed when the lieutenant was tumbling and tossing in delirium which weakened his frame with every paroxysm, while he ever seemed to be clutching for and grasping after some phantom which continually eluded him and which he called after in piercing tones; and the name that was ever on his lips was—Irene!

And she, poor child, was tossing in a restless, uneasy slumber which was disturbed by dreams of her father's frightful end, and in her sleep she saw the tragedy enacted a thousand times and in a thousand different ways, the ending, however, being always the same—a sudden, swift stab, a gush of blood, and death!

And early the next morning the two ladies and Langley took the train for New York, and the lieutenant being seriously wounded and unconscious, the story of the troubles at Bell-Point was not told, and no relief was sent to the girl, who was thus forced to attend to the light alone, although the corporal of the marines left by Lieutenant Murray offered his services and those of his men; yet she would not leave her charge, which she considered as a sacred bequest from her father.

The men who were thus left to repel any attacks of the wreckers were but six in number, yet they were brave young fellows, and though they knew that the wreckers greatly outnumbered them, they felt no anxiety, and passed most of their days in searching about the coast for some sign of the band, but without success, as the entrance through which Luke had passed was so skillfully dissimulated beneath an apparently impenetrable, tangled mass of low-growing trees and bushes that no trace of it could be discerned.

They respected the privacy of the girl, and never ventured into the lantern, which, with the aid of sundry conveniences which had been sent on shore from the Hornet, she had succeeded in making quite comfortable, and the sentinel who paced back and forward in front of the entrance to the tower, day and night, invariably presented arms when she passed out during the afternoon to take some necessary exercise in the way of a brisk walk, so much did the soldiers respect her, so much did they sympathize with her in her grief, so much did they respect her for the bravery she had displayed under the trying circumstances of the past few days.

She could not comprehend Luke's absence, but consoled herself with the thought that perhaps he had embarked on the cutter, it having been probably thought best that he should go to headquarters and personally make his report, and expecting him to return with the men who, she thought, would be appointed to the care of the light-house.

And so several days and nights passed, without anything happening to disturb the dull monotony of the hours.

But one evening toward dusk, the corporal who had charge of the little band stepped out of the tower, saying to the sentinel that he would

walk out a short distance and see that everything was quiet, and telling the men good-night, as he might be absent for some time, he stepped off briskly into the fast-disappearing twilight, and, descending the cliff, in a few moments was lost to view, while the darkness came rapidly down over the sea and land, the sky being overcast and no light shining from moon or stars.

Reaching the sands which lined the shore, he walked cautiously on around the cliff, clad in his uniform, and with his blue army coat buttoned lightly around him, for the night air was cold and piercing.

And as he walked along under the shadow of the cliff, his eyes strained to catch sight of the slightest suspicious object, and listening intently for any sound that might betray the presence of an enemy, he passed by a thick cluster of bushes which clung to the cliff just above him, and when he was just opposite it, two leaping figures sprung upon him, encircling his arms and his body, and placing a hand on his lips so that he could not utter a cry, and in a moment more he was bound and gagged, and lay helpless at his captors' feet, while they, stooping, picked him up by head and shoulders, and, throwing his cape over his head so as to blind him completely, began their march, and he soon realized from the hollow, echoing sound of their footsteps, from the dampness of the air, from the dank, earthy smell, that they were traversing some subterranean passage, and that he was, in all probability, in the hands of the wreckers.

And this conjecture became a certainty when at length his quick ear caught the hum of voices, which sounded nearer and nearer, until suddenly the cape which covered his face fell away, while he was placed on his feet, and, as soon as his eyes became accustomed to the glare, he looked around and found himself in the midst of a number of men sitting and standing in the center of a vaulted rocky chamber, where Luke had already been confronted by his captors.

Captain Wrake occupied his usual seat, and, waving the pressing crowd back, addressed the corporal, who returned glance for glance and scowl for scowl with interest, his gag being removed so that he could converse.

"What brings you here, sir?"

"You can answer that question better than I."

"How do you mean?"

"That I am here as a prisoner, brought as such by some of your men."

"You are stationed at the light-house of Bell-Point, having been landed there by the cutter Hornet."

"How many men have you with you?"

"You seem so well posted regarding my arrival that it seems surprising that your spies have not brought you full details."

"Have a care, sir, and cease your trifling; you are in my power, and I will stand no jesting!"

"All of which is immaterial to me. Seek your information elsewhere."

And coolly turning his back on the wrecker chief, he began a survey of the apartment.

But the eyes of Captain Wrake fairly blazed, and he thundered:

"By the gates of Hades, I will seek it elsewhere—in your camp! and the clothes—the uniform you wear, shall give me safe conduct, and be my passport. Take him in yonder"—pointing to an adjoining apartment—"and strip him of that blue suit and bring it hither, with the overcoat and cap."

"And make haste."

In a very short time the two men who had undertaken this mission returned with the articles, taking which, Captain Wrake left the large hall and retired to another room which was reached by a passage which branched off laterally.

And presently he returned, when a cry of admiration and astonishment broke from the lips of all the assistants, for the disguise was almost perfect, the two men being of about the same height and build.

Wrake had donned the uniform of the captured soldier, and shaved off his heavy mustache, and with the visor of the cap pulled down over his eyes, and the collar of his coat turned up, looked like the twin brother of the prisoner.

Giving directions relating to the close watching of the corporal, and motioning to two of his most trusted followers to accompany him, he started for the exit, the gong having rung out its signal to the sentry, stopping before he left the cavern to select a long piece of rope which was very strong, although exceedingly light, and this he wrapped about his body, under his outer coat, so that it was easily carried and yet could not be discovered without a personal search.

He then left the band, ordering them to await his return, and for all to remain within and not venture near the light-house, as any false move might derange his plans, and followed by his two companions, was soon in the open air, where he hurriedly whispered his instructions to them, described his plan, and then left them lying close under the cliff, just below the light-house, while he, rounding the point,

walked along hurriedly until he was nearly opposite the tower, when he, climbing the cliff, walked, hurriedly yet steadily, toward the figure whom he saw pacing up and down in front of the entrance.

And here his heart failed him for a moment, for he was struck by the thought that there might be a countersign, the non-knowledge of which would betray him; but it was too late to hesitate now, so he stepped quickly on, prepared to spring on the sentry should the latter halt him.

But, as his blue uniform was plainly visible in the glare cast by the lantern, the soldier suspected nothing and greeted him as he approached:

"Rather late, Corporal Gray; any news?"

His voice muffled so by the cloak which was folded about his throat, that it was unrecognizable, he answered, instantly:

"Nothing very important, but I must see Miss Homer at once."

And passing by the man, and taking care not to disturb the sleeping soldiers inside, he hastily ascended the steps and knocked on the upper door, when a gentle voice asked:

"Who is there?"

"Corporal Gray, Miss Homer," responded the wrecker, taking his cue from the name given him by the soldier below.

"Ah, one moment," replied the girl, and shortly afterward the door was opened and the false corporal stepped in.

As he entered, he turned and bolted the door, then, springing up the few steps that led into the lantern, he threw back the cape which concealed his face, disclosing his features to the astonished girl, while, seizing her about the body he placed his hand over her mouth, and hissed:

"Utter a sound, or attempt to escape, and I will hurl you through the sash to the rocks below!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

SILENCING A WITNESS.

WHAT they had concluded, was the case, for the man whom the old fisherman and his sons had captured had escaped and gained his freedom through the aid of Lillian.

Left alone in the vestibule for a moment, she had stood there until the sound from the closet attracted her curiosity, and child-like, yet with none of a child's fear, she had proceeded to gratify it, going to the door of the store-room, and pushing it open, and, standing there, tried to discover what was within.

"Come in, little one," came a voice to her, the wrecker modulating his naturally gruff tones, so that they sounded soft and caressing.

"Come in, and see if you cannot untie this cord; for it hurts my arms."

After hesitating a moment the little girl stole in cautiously, and, the man groaning to excite her sympathy, she began to struggle with the tough knots tied by the skillful fingers of the old sailor, and as a mariner's knots are proverbially easy to untie, although they never slip, she had soon loosened his wrists, when he performed a like office for his ankles, and stood erect, a free man, so far as his bonds were concerned.

Once released he did not hesitate a moment; but seizing the child and stifling her cries, for she began to cry and call out when he grasped her roughly, he left the tower and hurried away over the plain, and soon disappeared over the brow of the cliff, bearing Lillian in his arms.

He was not long in arriving at the tangled mass of shrubbery which marked the entrance to the wreckers' cave, and nearing the sentinel, he called out to him, and was instantly challenged.

"Who is there?" came the hoarse call from the guard, emphasized by a sharp click as his weapon was raised and cocked.

"It's me, Ransom," quickly answered Lillian's captor, recognizing the voice of the man who had captured Luke.

"An' who's me?" growled Ransom.

"Black Burt."

"Oh! Be ye alone?"

"No."

"Well," impatiently returned the sentinel, "who's with ye?"

"The kid."

"What kid?"

"The girl that the Indian carried off."

"Oh, ho! Then come on, and hurry up. It's amazin' glad ther Cap'll be ter see ye."

"He's been a'most crazy sence ther youngster war carted off by the red-skin."

"Whar did ye capter her?"

"Tell ye later," and the man who called himself Burt Black, but whom his comrades had facetiously dubbed Black Burt, strode past, and, being identified by Ransom, plunged into the darkness of the passageway which led to the main cavern, and, avoiding the trap which had proven so fatal to Winnemuka, hurried along through the rock-hewn corridor, until he reached the main hall where the band was gathered, listening to the distorted tales of the wreckers who had been frightened well-nigh

into insanity by the ghostly apparitions they had witnessed emerging from the fire and from the burning building.

But as he entered the voices of all were hushed and the eyes of the band were turned upon him, while the captain, leaping to his feet with an exclamation of delight as Black Burt held out the child, cried to him:

"Well done, Burt! Ask what reward you will and on my word you shall have it. I would rather have yonder brat in my power than all of these treasures," with a circular sweep of his hand.

"She out of my clutches and all my plans would come to naught; but now—" and he glared at the shrinking infant, as if he would brain her on the spot.

But as the innocent little child shrunk back in affright before the demoniac glare of his baleful eyes, and uttered a low wail of terror, the young wife of the captain, her heart touched by this appeal which could not fail to find an answering chord in every woman's breast, sprung forward, crying:

"For shame, Roy, you shall not terrify this dainty child!

"If prisoner she must remain, it shall be under my care; but she shall not be injured or worried or frightened.

"Come, my little pet, and we will leave this room, and you shall have something nice to eat and a good long sleep, for you are tired."

The soft, gentle tones reassured the little girl, and taking the hand of her companion, she followed her out of the cabin, while Wrake, already ashamed of his outburst, particularly so as it had been directed against so inoffensive a creature, smiled lazily and then said:

"Very well, Carita; only be careful she does not escape, for you well know what hinges on her remaining undiscovered."

Then as the curtain fell behind the two retreating figures, he gave a few orders to the band, spoke a few cutting, sarcastic sentences to those who, he said, had been frightened at their own shadows, and then, calling to two men who were standing aloof from the others as though they were new arrivals and comparative strangers, he left the room, and followed by the two men he had singled out, entered a small square room, where he seated himself, while through a door which was but half covered by the partially-drawn curtain, could be seen Carita, holding Lillian on her lap and listening with a sad smile to her childish prattle; for the child was wide awake, and had become instantly attached to the woman, who caressed her and who seemed so different from the young lieutenant who had attacked Luke.

The wrecker captain, after looking at the group for a few moments—for it was a pretty sight, Carita having donned a soft, clinging dressing-robe of some blue material which was most becoming to her, while the magnificence of the furniture and carpets and other surroundings which adorned this, her private room, made a fit setting for the two jewels in the center—turned to the two men and spoke to them in a low tone, they standing respectfully before him.

"You have thoroughly won the reward I promised you the night I met you and that, with what you found in the safe, will enable you to live comfortably for many years.

"I would advise you to select some foreign country, and, arriving there, remain for some time until this affair has blown over.

"It will not be very long; mysterious murders in New York are soon forgotten.

"You are sure you left no clew?"

"None at all, captain.

"But we are pretty well known in the city"—with a certain sort of pride at the recollection that he was a prominent character—"and they will miss us.

"Two and two make four; a disappearance and a 'mysterious murder' can generally be connected, especially when the missing ones are suspected of having been connected with other little matters of the same nature."

"Very true; and if you leave the country you must do so secretly, or the police will be down on you.

"Have you consulted and decided regarding what you prefer to do?"

"Well, captain," returned the former spokesman, "as you say, we will have to be a little long about getting away, and we have determined to ask you to allow us to remain here for a time.

"No one will suspect us of being here, and after awhile, when things are a little quieter, we can leave the country."

"No; you cannot remain here.

"It would be dangerous for all of us, and you must leave in the morning—now in fact."

"It strikes me, captain, that you are anxious to get rid of us and hope to see us hanged, for it is ten to one that we would be captured if we were seen. Our description has probably been telegraphed all over the country before this.

"And if we were captured, and if our necks were in danger, why—well, you know that a secret is often worth more than a man's life, and we might tell a very pretty little romance

about the connection between a certain 'mysterious murder' and one Captain Wrake!"

And the villain, whose occupation could not have been detected from either speech, manner or bearing, turned to his companion with a—

"Ain't that so, Harry?"

"Right you are, old boy," acquiesced "Harry," "and the captain'll soon see that it is best for him not to ride rusty."

"What!" thundered Wrake.

"You dare threaten me!"

And in a moment the two wreckers were rolling on the floor, bathed in their own gore, as a long, wicked-looking knife flashed in the lamplight and buried itself first in the heart of one and then of the other.

And as the child, whose attention was attracted by the uplifted tones, struggled to the earth and stared at the scene with horror-fascinated eyes, Wrake, stepping to the side of the cavern opposite the door through which she looked and brushing aside a little pile of rubbish with his foot, stooped, lifted a small stone, took a package from his pocket, and laid it away, and then covered up the hiding-place and left the room, drawing the curtain before he went out.

And the two murderers lay there where they had expiated their guilt with their own lives, while the lamp burned away, flickered, and finally went out.

CHAPTER XXIV.

'TWIXT HEAVEN AND EARTH.

As George Edgerton half-sat, half-reclined in the midst of the thick darkness which encompassed him like a pall, his thoughts were excruciating in their agony, for he saw not the faintest prospect of escape, well knowing that the rocky walls which confined him within their narrow limits were not colder nor harder than the heart of the man who held him in his power.

His position resembled nothing so much as that of a person who, apparently dead, but bound only in the chains of catalepsy, is clad in the cerements of the grave, placed in the coffin and is interred, the earth and the clouds falling on the casket-lid sending ice-cold chills of terror to his soul, while the iron hands of the trance into which he is plunged chokes back the cries of horror which well up in his throat.

How long he remained in this half-unconscious state he never knew; it might be hours, it might be days, for at times he fell into a disturbed sleep, starting up at some of the visions which attended his slumbers, only to be recalled to the terrible reality by the rattling and the clanging of the chains which bound him.

He ate but sparingly, husbanding every crumb of the loaf which Wrake had left him, so that even this miserable existence could be prolonged as long as possible, so tenacious of life is the average human being even in the midst of the most dismal surroundings and intense sufferings.

Fearing that his brain might turn should he brood over his condition, he examined, thoroughly, every portion of the cell he could reach, and, finding four pins in the lapel of his coat, he threw them from him and passed hours in seeking for them, the floor of the cell being rough and broken so that the little morsels of wire were often hidden away so that he could scarcely discover their whereabouts; yet this simple and almost childish occupation kept his mind occupied and prevented the thoughts he would avoid.

He had, after a long search, just picked up the last of the four pins, and carefully placed it with the others in his coat, intending to sleep for as long a time as he might be able to, when a sound as of iron grating against iron sent a thrill through his body.

"They are returning to see if I am dead," he muttered to himself, and then leaning forward gazed in the direction of the door, for it seemed to him that the sight of a human face, the sound of a human voice would drive him almost wild with delirious joy, while he longed for a breath of fresh air, that in the cell having become fetid and unwholesome.

And as he looked, the door swung open, and a dim mysterious light stole into the cell and illuminated its every corner.

And standing in the opening was a slight figure with bronzed complexion, and long black hair, whose hand uplifted, was posed on her lips in token of silence, while she noiselessly stepped forward and with a key she held, unlocked the chains which bound Edgerton, and, taking him by the hand led him out into the corridor, and then turning, she locked the door behind her.

George followed her without hesitation as one walking in his sleep, and as they traversed the corridors which led hither and thither, showing that the earth had been rent and torn in every direction by some mighty convulsion of Nature, he wondered, but in vain, what would be the ending of all this.

But finally a fresher breeze struck his face and they soon emerged into the open air, while not far from them could be heard the gentle lap, lap, lapping of the waves as they plashed softly on the beach.

The Indian girl led him to a small boat which

lay moored near by, and motioning him to step in, cast off the rope that held the little craft, and seating herself amidships, took the oars and sent the wherry dancing over the waters, heading away from the shore and then, after a time, pulling around the point high on which glowed the beacon of Belle-Point Light.

They had thus rowed in silence for some time, for all of George's attempts at conversation had met with no response, when he, being seated in the stern of the boat and enabled to see for some distance ahead, saw, floating far off on the starboard bow, an indistinct object which resembled a boat, and, pointing he directed the girl's attention to it, when she instantly turned the boat in that direction.

Increasing the power of her strokes until the little craft fairly leaped over the water, they were soon alongside, and looking into the boat, but it was empty.

One of the oars lay across the seats, while the other rested in the row-locks, and backing her craft up against the other, the girl motioned for the youth to get in, and he, after protesting a moment and repeating his thanks a hundred times, finally complied, when the Indian maiden, without so much as a glance at him, pulled hastily away.

For a time he sat watching the pale-blue light which seemed to encompass her about like a cloud, when suddenly it disappeared and the little boat and its occupant vanished in the darkness.

Puzzling his head over this mystery, George picked up the oar which was lying across the seats and settled it in its place in the row-locks, and then, grasping the other, prepared to pull toward the land and seek shelter at the light-house; but to his surprise the larboard oar would not move, and seemed to be held in its place by some heavy weight attached to the blade.

Thinking that it had become entangled in a mass of floating sea-weed he tried to pull it in, but with no better success, and then leaned over the side to look, only to start back with a cry of terror, for his nerves were weakened by the terrible experience he had undergone in the cell.

But nerving himself, he again leaned over and looked, and saw just beneath him a white face with closed eyes and matted hair, lying as still as death, while the body, half-submerged, lay across the oar which the apparently dead hands were clutching with an iron grip.

And at the same moment he saw that it was Luke, and bending far over he raised the boy and lifted him into the boat, and began to chafe his hands after removing his wet clothing and wrapping him in a huge ulster he wore, and which the wreckers had left in his possession when he was cast into the cell.

After half an hour's steady work the boy uttered a faint sigh and finally opened his eyes, when Edgerton taking from his inside pocket the brandy-flask he carried and which he had not touched, forced some of the liquor down the boy's throat and then gave him some of the bread which he had placed in his coat pocket for safer keeping, and Luke ate ravenously.

Restored by the brandy and the food he related how he came there.

After being struck down into the water, he barely escaped drowning but managed to clamber into the boat again, but was so weak he could not manage the oars, and lay half-stunned in the bottom of the craft.

The wind was off-shore and he drifted far out to sea and was blown about for he knew not how many days, until finally he was again blown back toward the shore, and while endeavoring to stand up and signal for help had fallen from exhaustion and tumbled overboard, being saved from drowning only by the death-clutch on the oar his fingers had encountered as he struck the water.

Another sup from the flask strengthened him, and so George, taking the oars, pulled away in the direction of the light-house, steering by Luke's direction for the cove, where they soon landed.

Approaching the tower from the side opposite the entrance, they arrived almost at its base when, happening to glance upward, they stopped, awe-stricken, for, suspended in mid-air, with no apparent means of support and half-way up the tower was a female figure clad all in white, with outstretched hands and a wealth of yellow hair forming a golden aureole about her head, as she swayed gently to and fro, as if resting on the bosom of the night-wind.

And as they gazed, the light in the tower was suddenly extinguished and the swinging figure disappeared as if by magic; while, as if it were a signal, the two standing there received each a crushing blow from behind and measured their lengths upon the sward.

And at the same moment the lantern blazed up again and the white figure descended slowly to earth.

CHAPTER XXV.

IN THE TOILS.

THE girl was powerless in the wolfish grasp of the wrecker captain, and dared not struggle

for fear that he might carry out his threat and dash her to the rocks below, so submitted passively to her captor who deftly tied his handkerchief over her mouth and tied her hands behind her while he proceeded with his preparations, which were soon completed.

Uncoiling from his body the long white cotton rope he had brought with him, he took from his waist a stout leather belt and buckling it, passed it around the girl's body so that it hung loosely, and then attached the rope to it in front, so that when in the air, the weight of her body would be thrown on her back and shoulders.

He then released her hands and removed the gag from her face and thus addressed her:

"You know now that I am not Corporal Gray.

"Who I am does not concern you at present; but you will soon know, and until then must ally your curiosity.

"I am now going to lower you from the balcony outside to the ground, and in your apparently perilous descent you will suffer no harm if you will act as I decide.

"Keep quiet; make no effort to attract attention or call for aid and you shall reach the ground in safety.

"Make the slightest noise, call out in the faintest whisper and I will loose the rope and let you fall, to be dashed to pieces; and if, once at the foot of the tower, you endeavor to escape or cry out for help, my men who are below will brain you where you stand, for they have their orders!"

The trembling girl nodded as he paused for a reply, and, lifting her slight form, he let her gently over the railing, and, winding the rope, once around the iron bar that formed its top he let her slowly down an inch at a time, holding fast to the rope and paying it out, little by little.

And she swung out from the tower, clad in her dress of creamy hue, while the cotton rope was invisible against the surface of the light-house walls which were painted white, while Wrake crouched low at the bottom of the balcony, so as to be invisible and the girl seemed to be floating in mid-air without any sustaining support.

But suddenly the light inside was extinguished as a smarter puff of air than ordinary blew in through the open sash, and the tower was bathed in darkness, and with a deep-voiced expletive the wrecker took a turn of the cord around the railing, fastening it securely, and hastened inside the lantern, for he feared that the sentry's attention might be attracted by the sudden darkness, and, closing the sash after him, hastily relighted the lamps, finding a few matches in his pocket, and as they again shone out clear and bright, returned to the balcony, taking the precaution to close the sash carefully, and untying the rope, again began to lower the terrified girl to the ground.

And suddenly he knew by the slackening of the cord that she had reached the bottom, so, after looking over to make sure of the fact, he uncoiled the rope from about the iron bar, and tossed the end he held to the ground, seeing, as he again looked over, that his two assistants had secured the girl and were walking with her toward the edge of the cliff.

Then, reëntering the lantern, he secured the sash firmly, and once more drawing his cap over his eyes and throwing his cape over his head, he unbolted the door and proceeding leisurely down the steps, passed out through the vestibule without disturbing the sleeping men, and emerging into the open air again found himself in the presence of the sentinel.

"Going out again?" asked the latter, whispering the words so as not to disturb his sleeping comrades.

"Yes," returned the disguised man, adopting the same tone.

"I saw some figures moving about just out here, a few moments ago, and I wish to investigate."

"Hadn't you better take some of the boys with you in case you meet any one?"

"It is not worth while. I am not going very far."

"If I hear any disturbance I will come to your assistance."

"Very well."

"Be careful, corporal. These men stop at nothing, you know."

"I'll take care."

"Have you your revolver?"

"Of course."

"Well, then, good luck."

"Thanks."

And in a few moments he had disappeared behind the tower and was lost to the sentinel's view, the latter resuming his slow march up and down before the door and suspecting nothing whatever.

As Wrake came in sight of the two bodies stretched out on the ground before him, his hand caught his revolver, while for an instant he stopped; but seeing no sign of life about the place he advanced cautiously, and, bending low, recognized Luke and Edgerton, and with a fiendish chuckle realized that they were both in his power, although he could not compre-

hend how the latter had escaped and came to be there.

Hastily assuring himself that they would remain powerless for some time, he hurried to the place where the two men were awaiting him, and found them concealed just below the edge of the plateau, with Carrie Homer in their company, the girl being bound and gagged and unable to move or to call for help, as she might have done despite the threats that had been hissed into her ear.

With a few words he ordered the wreckers to procure assistance after securing Luke and Edgerton, and to bear them to the cavern, while he, loosening the ropes which bound the girl's feet, ordered her to rise and follow him, aiding her in the somewhat precipitous descent, and finally entering the corridor and proceeding to the main cavern.

And in a few short minutes the apparently lifeless bodies of the two young men were brought in and thrown into the corner on a pile of rags like sacks of grain, when Wrake gave orders that their wounds should be attended to, and that, as soon as they were restored to consciousness, they should be separately confined in one of the caverns with which the whole earth in this vicinity seemed to be tunneled.

When this had been done he proceeded to the cell where Edgerton was confined, and, gloating over his helpless condition, he addressed him in sneering tones:

"You see that you did not remain long away from your future home.

"For until death brings you relief I swear that you shall not leave this place, and when I make an oath it is inviolable.

"You, of all concerned, except myself, know my secret, and you must be silenced.

"In a short time you will all be here together, and Captain Wrake will drop his present occupation and name and enter upon the career of luxury and fashion which he is so eminently adapted to fill.

"You do not ask after your companion; have you ceased to take any interest in him since he can be of no further use to you?"

"The idea is worthy of the brain that conceived it; I know that you would lie to me, so see no use in questioning you."

"Snarl and growl and spit, my young tiger—your claws are clipped and words do not wound, or you would kill me where I stand.

"But now I will leave you, for I have business in New York and a fashionable call to make on Fifth avenue, although I do not expect to find many persons at home.

"Good-night, and pleasant dreams!"

To this sneering address Edgerton responded not a word, and Wrake, closing and locking the door carefully after him, proceeded to the dungeon where Luke was confined.

"Well, my young sea-serpent, how find you your quarters?" was his greeting.

"Insupportable, since you entered!"

"Oh, ho! Showing your teeth, are you?"

"Then I will play dentist and draw them; but not just yet.

"I wish you to have full control of your voice when you assume your part in the little domestic drama which I am arranging.

"Your family history forms the basis for the plot, and your friends assume different characters in the play.

"Prepare yourself, my lad, for the representation, for it will, in all probability, become a tragedy before it is ended."

And without giving Luke time to reply, he clanged the door to after him and departed, leaving the boy a prey to a thousand conflicting emotions; for he suddenly realized that this man knew who he was and was thoroughly familiar with the history of his—Luke's—life, which always had been as a sealed book to him.

And the hours passed slowly, broken only from time to time by the visits of one of his jailers, who supplied him with food and drink.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ABDUCTED.

IRENE FAULCONER sat in her lonely home, burdened with the weight of cares which seemed too great for her frail strength to support, for she was utterly alone in the world, and, save for Walter's love and care, would have been almost tempted to give up in despair.

Her father dead, her sister's whereabouts unknown, her aunt called to the Far West by a sudden and unexpected telegram announcing the desperate illness of her only child, her lot was indeed a sad one, and her fortitude was put to the severest tests.

Yet she was a brave little girl and struggled on, living in the anticipation of the future, when as Walter's wife, she would have no more cares, no more troubles, while her joys would be doubled and her griefs divided.

She had means that were far, far beyond her wants, for her father had left millions, and no will being discovered, she had, as the apparently sole survivor, become the sole inheritor of his vast wealth.

Seated in the parlor of the house where her father had met his violent death, of the perpetrators of which not a clew had been discovered, she was thinking of all these things when she

was aroused from her reverie by a knock at the door, and, in response to her summons, a servant entered, bearing a card on a silver salver, and taking the bit of pasteboard up mechanically she glanced at the name engraven thereon.

"Colonel Arthur Breytoun," she read, and wondering what could have induced him to thus intrude on her, she turned to the servant.

"Tell him, James, that I wish to be excused."

Bowing low the footman left the room, but returned in a moment.

"Pardon, Miss Faulconer," was his remark, as he again entered the room.

"Colonel Breytoun desires extremely to see you; for he says that it is a matter of the utmost importance that urges him to call."

"Then show him in," returned the girl, listlessly; for she took not much interest in anything and feared no further blows from the Iron Hand of Fate, and she knew nothing of the duel in which Walter had figured as principal and Breytoun as second.

In a moment the door of the drawing-room was thrown open for the third time, and the servant announced:

"Colonel Breytoun."

Without rising from her seat, Irene bowed coldly, and motioning the visitor to a seat some distance away, accosted him:

"To what am I indebted, Colonel Breytoun, for the honor of this visit?"

"To an unfortunate occurrence, Miss Faulconer, with which I am sorry to acquaint you."

"An unfortunate occurrence?"

"Most unfortunate."

"Has fate still another stroke in store for me? I beg of you, colonel, speak!"

"You do not probably know that my office is just opposite Mr. Langley's, and that this circumstance, combined with others, has made us very intimate—I may say warm—friends."

"Mr. Langley, as you probably know, left the city unexpectedly yesterday, intending to return to-morrow or next day."

"But this morning my office-boy received a telegram directed to me, which he immediately brought to the Board and handed to me, and—I beg of you to be calm, Miss Faulconer, here it is."

The girl took the yellow bit of paper, which fluttered like a leaf in her trembling hands, and, not glancing at the date or address at the top, read:

"Mr. Walter Langley thrown from a carriage and seriously injured, perhaps fatally. He begs you to communicate the intelligence to Miss Faulconer and bring her here at once."

"(Signed) DR. R. E. EUSTACE."

Like one dazed she sat for a moment with set lips and white face, her staring eyes fixed on the words before her, which were of such terrible import, and then, rising, while the telegram fell to the floor, she cried:

"Oh, yes, yes! I will go at once."

"I will be ready in a few minutes, colonel, and will join you."

"Have you a carriage?"

"My coupé is at the door, Miss Faulconer, and is at your disposal, as are also my services."

"And believe me when I say that my deepest sympathies are—"

He stopped as the girl, seemingly unconscious of the fact that he was addressing her, hurriedly left the room and hastened up stairs, leaving him alone in the parlor, when he stooped, and picking up the telegram carelessly stuck it in his pocket, while a look of exultant joy overspread his features as he muttered:

"The bait has proven successful, and the trap has caught the victim."

In a wonderful short time the girl returned dressed for the journey and followed by a servant carrying a small hand-sachel, and with a gesture to Breytoun she swept out of the front door and down the steps to where the well-appointed carriage awaited them, and, the door being held open by the obsequious colonel, she entered and seated herself, while he, following her, gave a direction to the driver, and the door being closed, the vehicle rattled off toward the depot.

Taking the train Colonel Breytoun, having made the girl as comfortable as he could, left her to her own thoughts and retired to the smoking-car, where, lighting a cigar, he sat buried in his own thoughts, while the train sped on, the darkness came down over the earth, and they plunged on toward the end of that journey which was to result so fearfully for one of the twain thus so strangely brought together.

The journey lasted far into the night, and Irene's sad thoughts were only interrupted at intervals by an occasional visit from Breytoun, who came to inquire if he could be of any assistance to her, until at length he appeared with the announcement that they were nearly at the end of their journey, and that they were to descend at the next station, which they soon reached and found deserted, save by the sleepy agent, and a man who at once came forward, and touching his hat, asked if he were Colonel Breytoun.

"Colonel Breytoun is my name; do you come from Doctor Eustace?"

"Yes, sir. He sent me over with his ca-

riage to meet you, for the town is some distance away, and you could not get any conveyance here to-night."

"How is Mr. Langley?"

"Dying, I fear, sir."

"I am Doctor Eustace's partner, and saw the patient a short time ago, and—"

"Oh, sir!" cried Irene, clasping her hands, while the tears welled in her eyes. "Do not say there is no hope."

Gazing at her curiously, the young physician turned to Breytoun and whispered:

"His sister?"

"His future wife—if he lives."

These remarks were overheard by Irene, as, indeed, it was intended; but, interrupting, she pleaded:

"Oh, sir; do not let us waste any time, for every moment is precious. Let us hasten away. Is it very far?"

"An hour's drive, Miss—"

"Miss Faulconer," added Breytoun.

"But she is right. You can tell us of the accident as we drive on. Where is your carriage?"

"Just around here."

In a few moments the three were seated in a covered vehicle, drawn by two horses, and were spinning over the road at a pace which, speedy as it was, seemed slow and snail-like to the impatient girl, while the physician, who held the lines, narrated to them the story of Langley's accident.

"He was driving across the country to visit a large seaside cottage, which he thought of purchasing for a summer residence," said their guide, "and mentioned the fact of intending to make it a wedding-present to his bride."

"It was getting late, and he was urging his horses to their highest speed, so as to reach the house before dark, when the forward wheel struck some unnoticed obstacle, and he was thrown out, striking heavily on his head, and lay for some time unconscious."

"Fortunately, Doctor Eustace, who was returning from a professional visit, discovered him, and taking the apparently lifeless body in his buggy, drove rapidly home, and after several hours' attention succeeded in restoring him to consciousness, when he related the story of his accident, and begged the physician to send the telegram which Colonel Breytoun had received that day."

"The rest they knew, except that concussion of the brain was feared and his life was placed in the deepest jeopardy."

As in a dream the girl listened, and, as in a dream the different objects on the roadside flitted by, until finally, the fresh air blowing in her face, the salt smell borne on the wings of the night-wind, the never-ceasing roar that she heard, gave evidence of the fact that they were approaching the shore, yet, strain her eyes as she would, she could discover no lights which would show the vicinity of a village or town, and she began to feel a little uneasy.

But, suddenly, as they swept out into the open from the road, which had for some time wound in and out among the overhanging branches of the forest, they had traversed, a broad glare burst on her sight and a light-house, perched high above them, streamed its rays far out over land and sea.

At the same moment the vehicle stopped, Breytoun, opening the door, leaped out, and turning to the now terrified girl, said:

"We have arrived."

"But, colonel," she stammered, "I see no houses, no place where Walter could be. Surely he is not in yonder light-house?"

"Come, girl, step down," was the stern response. "The farce is played through, and the tragedy is about to begin."

"Oh, colonel—"

"Colonel no longer—for the present. Captain, just now. Allow me to present myself to you," continued her abductor, removing his disguise, which changed him completely.

"Captain Wrake, at your service!"

And as the unfortunate girl sunk to the ground, half-fainting and a prey to a thousand conflicting emotions, Wrake, alias Breytoun, lifted her and carried her slight form easily to the entrance of the wreckers' den.

The carriage and driver had disappeared.

CHAPTER XXVII.

PUNISHMENT AND REWARD.

So Irene, Carrie, Luke and George were all in the power of Captain Wrake, and it seemed as if his schemes were about to be crowned with success, for there was apparently no escape for any of them, so closely were they guarded and so carefully were they watched, and the day following the entire number were gathered together in the main cavern, while the band of Captain Wrake stood or sat about the room in various attitudes; but the wife of the leader was absent, and, despite all search, could not be found.

Ranged as were Luke and his companions in misfortune in a semicircle in front of Wrake, who sat in an easy-chair, surveying the group with a satisfied expression, they could but wonder what all this meant; but soon learned as captor and jailer leaned forward and addressed them:

"Many years ago there lived in New York City a gentleman who had married a young widow who had an only son; that son now addresses you."

"She idolized her boy, he adored her, and when she married a second time she was influenced as much by a desire to assure her boy's future as by the regard and esteem in which she held the gentleman who offered her his hand and his fortune, which was already immense."

"He promised her that her son should be well cared for, and in the event of his—the husband's—death, should be prominently mentioned in his will."

"But in less than six months the young wife died, leaving her idolized boy in the hands of his step-father, who promised again that he would make him his sole heir, and at the time he meant it, for he worshipped his wife, and the thought that another would ever occupy her place never entered his stricken mind."

"And as years rolled on he seemed still faithful to the memory of the dead, and raised his step-son in the belief that he only should inherit his possessions."

"But time brought change, and before the boy—who was now seventeen years old—was aware of his intention, he had married and installed a new mistress in the house which the lad had always looked upon as his own."

"Immediately the deep affection he felt for the old man changed to deepest hate, for he thought that the memory of his sainted mother had been insulted, and the promise made to her on her death-bed broken by her husband, who had proven false to his oath."

"There was a stormy scene, and the boy left the house and began a struggle with the world for his bread, and a hard struggle it was."

"But years rolled by, and children came to the home of the recreant, and, learning this, the disinherited lad began his schemes for vengeance."

"There were two daughters and a son, the oldest girl being some two years older than the boy, who was about as much older than his younger sister."

"By a successful ruse the boy was captured by a tool of the outcast, who held him in his power through knowledge of a crime committed, and sent away from America."

"And that boy thus stolen away and watched by the man, who was well paid for his work, was you, Luke Faulconer—baptized Lucian Langley Faulconer, after a dear friend of your father's, and of whom Walter Langley is the son!"

Like a thunder-clap this announcement fell upon the hearers, while Luke was stunned by this revelation of all that was mysterious in his life, and he was about to speak, when Wrake interrupted him with a gesture, and continued:

"Yes; you and Irene Faulconer are brother and sister, but your eldest sister, as I have learned from closely questioning a child saved from the wreck, perished with her husband on the Jessie."

"And this is the child!"

He motioned to one of the men, who entered a side corridor and returned in a moment with Lillian; catching sight of whom, Irene, with a wild cry, rushed forward and clasped her in her arms, crying:

"Oh, my dear, darling little sister!" and a hundred endearing exclamations, while the child clung to her frantically, as if she would never be torn from her embracing arms.

"A touching family reunion," sneered Wrake, as he glanced toward the group, while Luke vainly endeavored to break from the grasp of the two men who held him and rush to the sisters he had never known.

"The little one was born long after you, sir, but, as everything comes to him who waits, so she also has fallen into my hands."

"And now that you are in my power, nothing stands between me and your father's colossal fortune, for your mother is dead, your father is dead, and I have his papers containing a will that he made in my favor long ago, and also one he drew up the day before he died, whereby he disinherits me, and leaves his wealth to you, his children."

"For you must disappear—how, I have not yet determined; but I will not falter when the hour of my success is so near, and the last will destroyed and your fate unknown, I will produce my testimony and enter upon the career of luxury and pleasure my much-honored step-father in his kindness has provided for me."

"As for you, George Edgerton, and you, Carrie Homer, you know too much, and their fate shall be yours!"

"As the in-coming sea sweeps before it all the puny barriers which man can raise, I will sweep from my path every obstacle which confronts me; and without hesitation, without remorse, seize the inheritance of which man's faithlessness has deprived me!"

And with nostrils quivering with passion and his eye glancing fire, he rose to his full height and stood, with outstretched arm, like an avenging angel, while the courage of his hearers sunk as they realized that this was an enemy, implacable, deadly, who would hesitate at no crime which would gain his ends.

But, as he stood there, the curtains hanging before the doorway were thrown aside, and the form of the mysterious maiden stood in the entrance, as, with uplifted hand pointed straight at Wrake, she spoke, while the superstitious band shrunk away and cowered in awe before the visitor:

"Roy Forester, I have saved you from many a crime, and now come to prevent this, your last and greatest."

"You know that my threats are never idle ones, so—beware!"

"Fiend or angel or human though you be, I will now discover," shrieked Wrake, or Roy Forester, as he must now be called, as, insane from fury, he leaped forward, before he could be prevented, and, lifting high his hand, smote the girl with glittering steel, deep in the side, and as she fell, bathed in blood, she faintly murmured:

"Oh, Roy, Roy, this from you!"

And in a moment she was dead, and as she died the assassin recognized, through her disguise, the features of his wife, who had thus arrayed herself on more than one occasion to save from death some perishing creature, that she might, in some way, mitigate her husband's crimes; her husband whom, bathed in blood and wickedness as he was, she loved more than life itself.

As he realized what had happened, the wretched man became frenzied and fairly shrieked:

"Now let the jaws of Inferno vomit their hordes of lost spirits to exult in the sight of what a man can do when opposed."

"I give you two minutes to prepare for your doom, for as sure as all I loved on earth lies dead in her shroud of gore, so surely will you join her in eternity when twice sixty seconds shall have ticked their time away!"

And holding his watch in one hand, he raised his pistol with the other and pointed it at the helpless group before him, while the men he had bought to aid him in his schemes for vengeance stood back and did not lift a finger to help the prisoners.

But at that moment a red form bounded stealthily into the cavern behind the madman, and, striking his arm, threw the pistol high in the air, where it exploded harmlessly, while two sinewy arms encircled the lunatic's body and held him powerless.

And at the same time a party of blue coats burst in after him, and leveled their rifles at the band, who were taken so completely by surprise that they had no time to raise a weapon, while Walter Langley, leaping to Irene's side, caught the fainting girl in his arms just as she fell to the ground.

It did not take long to secure the band, and then matters were explained, for Langley, calling at Irene's house, had found her gone, but a clue to her whereabouts was discovered in the telegram sent by one of the band to "Colonel Breytoun," from a station near by, and which had been dropped by accident in the hall.

Knowing that there must be treachery about, he had hastened to New London and communicated with Lieutenant Murray, of the Hornet, and finding Winnemuka on board had steamed away with the Indian as a guide.

The light-house reached, they learned of the disappearance of the sergeant—who was soon found imprisoned in one of the cells—and led by Winnemuka, had arrived just in time.

The story related by Wrake was retold, and before leaving, careful search was made for the papers referred to, but without success until little Lillian pointed out their whereabouts, having seen them hidden by Captain Wrake.

And then the party, rescued, rescuers and captured, left the cavern, and were soon in the open air, and leaving two of the men to care for the light-house, embarked.

But as they neared the Hornet, Wrake, whose hands were but loosely tied, suddenly leaped to his feet, and, seizing Lillian, plunged overboard, crying:

"Your cup of joy shall have a drop of bitterness in it!"

But as he struck the water Winnemuka was beside him and wrenched the child from his grasp and handed her to the outstretched arms of Irene, only at the same instant to be entwined in the iron embrace of Wrake, or Roy Forester, and in a moment they sunk, their disappearing place shown only by a few bubbles which marked the grave of "The Last of the Shinnecoeks."

Two clippings from a New York paper of different dates will furnish a sufficient sequel to this story:

MARRIED.

LANGLEY—FAULCONER.—On Wednesday, September 12th, 187-, by the Rev. James A. Asher, at the residence of the bride, Walter Langley to Irene, daughter of the late General Faulconer, all of New York City.

FAULCONER—HOMER.—On Monday, February 4th, 1884, by the Rev. James A. Asher, at the residence of Walter Langley, Esq., Lucian Langley Faulconer to Caroline, daughter of the late Captain Homer.

THE END.

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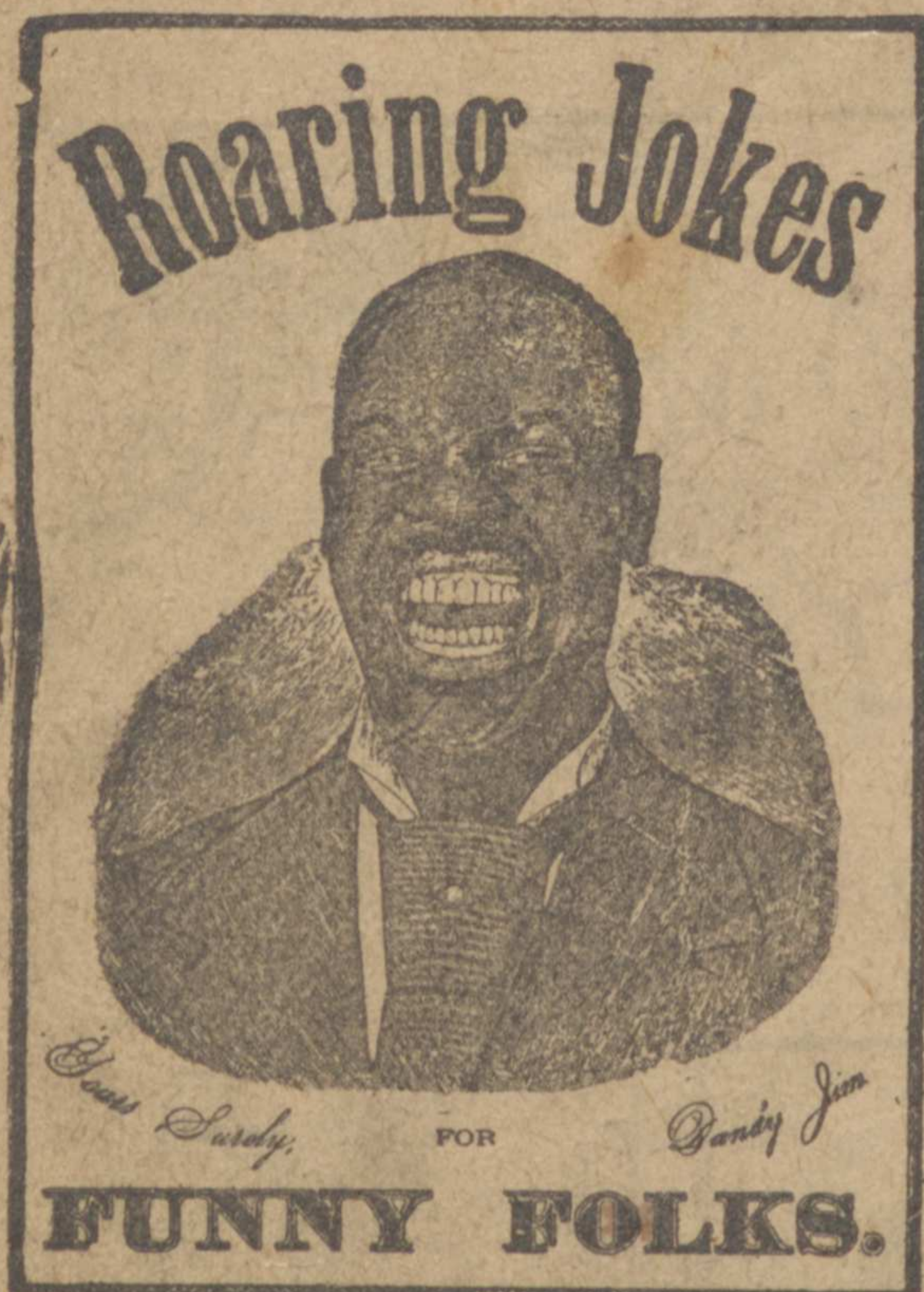
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